

A
System of Divinity,
in
A COURSE of SERMONS,
on the
FIRST INSTITUTIONS of RELIGION;
On the BEING and ATTRIBUTES of GOD;
on some of the most important
ARTICLES of the CHRISTIAN-RELIGION,
in Connection;

And

On the several Virtues and Vices of Mankind:
with Occasional Discourses.

Being a Compilation from the best Sentiments of the polite Writers,
and eminent, sound Divines, both ancient and modern, on the same
Subjects, properly connected, with Improvements, particularly adapted
for the Use of chief FAMILIES and STUDENTS in DIVINITY;
and for CHURCHES, for the Benefit of Mankind in general.

Volume IV.

By the Rev'd W^m DAVY. A. B.

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A COURSE OF LECTURES
ON THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE
FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS



Some general Duties,

necessarily flowing from the foregoing

Attributes.

"If I be a Father, where is mine Honour?"

MALACHI. I. 6,

William Hepburn, M.D.
July 11, 1808
London, 1808.

Some Geometrical Duties.

especially following from the following



"Will be a Happy Surprise to Many Friends".
MAGGINS, E.C.

C O N T E N T S

of the

— fourth Volume.

—

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३० रुपये का बहुत सारा वित्तीय विकास होना चाहिए।

Matt. v. 48. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect."

Idiotting, with every Advantage, laid before you,
(in the best Manner I have been able,) the Nature
and Perfections of God; and vindicated Religion
from the Impression of Superstition, proving it to
be real Wisdom, and coolessness with the true Light
of Mankind. It shall be the Subject of the present
Discourse to enjoin you, (as far as our Nature
will admit,) to a Conformity with it.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven." Matthew 5:48

• Goals as the complements of Patterns of Interaction, and whatever copies after it, changes back to its original form.

But, as many of the Persons of God are yet
to be attained by us, how indeed, in that case,
shall we Delight in which God pleases? I
cannot tell it my Soul now; however, I can
tell you, to know,

2 On imitating the Perfections of God.

First, What we are to understand by Perfection in general, in it's several Senses and Acceptations.

II. How far we, his Creatures, are to resemble the Perfection of God; out of which, there follow

III. That the Duty here enjoined us, is by no Means impossible; notwithstanding the ^{same} .84 .v .33 .M

Concluding with such Inferences as their result from the same. And,

"Firstly, Perfection may be capable of several Senses, according to the several Subjects Whereto it is applied; but in respect of God, so far as God is concerned, in His highest and most absolute Sense, it signifies a State so elevated and complete, that as in Defect, to all Addition, is excluded from it. And the Being who is thus perfect, not only ^{equally} is not, but cannot possibly at any Time, be either more or less, better or worse than it is."

Thus we affirm most truly of God, that He is perfect in Holiness, in Justice, in Wisdom, in Power, and, the like; (i.e.) there is no Degree of these nor any other Excellencies, attributed to the Divine Nature, of which He is not in full Possession; and, what He thus stands possessed of, can no more admit of Diminution, than of Increase. But then will I

It is very plain, that this absolute Perfection can
only be ascribed to God alone; because the very
Nature of it includes Infinity and Immutability, for
whatever is not infinite, may be greater and better;
and whatever is not unchangeable, may be less and
worse. Since, therefore, none but God is infinite &
unchangeable, it follows, that none but God is, or
can be, absolutely, and in the highest Sense of the
Word, **PERFECT**. But,

When Perfection is attributed to any Creature,
we must understand it in a **QUALIFIED** Sense; as limi-
ted by the Capacities of the Creature of whom it
is spoken, as consisting in all those Attainments, of
which a Creature, compounded of Soul and Body,
(considered as such,) is capable. But, this is a Per-
fection belonging to none, except to the **FIRST**
Adam before the Fall; or to that **SECOND** Adam,
“the Lord from Heaven,” who, for our Sakes,
vouchsafed to take the human Nature upon him.

If the Word be used of any other, it can denote
that Perfection only, which fallen Man, under all
the Disadvantages of original Corruption, but as-
sisted by Divine Grace, can, (as Musters now stand
with the Race of a hapless Ancestor,) come up to.
And this goes not only far infinitely below the
complete Perfection peculiar to God; but is with-
out all

4 On imitating the Perfections of God.

All, vastly short even of that by Alledged Perfection, which the Human Nature, in our first Parents, (but before the Fall,) was formed in, and fitted for.

We are here to observe, (in further Illustration of this Point,) that the Perfection of fallen Man, (according to the Distinction of the Schools, by Divines,) is two-fold, - the One of Grace in Trial, and the Other of Glory.

This is evidently St. Paul's Meaning in his Epistle to the Corinthians; where, (speaking of Knowledge particularly,) he says, "We know in PART, and we prophecy in PART; but when that which is PERFECT is come, then that which is in PART shall be done away." Again,

This also seems to be his Meaning in his Epistle to the Philippians, where after Mention made of attaining to the Resurrection of the Dead, he adds immediately; "not as tho I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow AFTER" (i.e.) "press towards the high Mark."

The Expression, indeed, we often meet with in Scripture. Abraham is commanded to "walk before God, and be perfect." Our Saviour exhorts his Disciples to "be perfect, even as their Father in Heaven is perfect." And the Apostles, with great Earnestness, press us to "go on unto Perfection." Nay, one of them declares, that "He who is born of God, sinneth not."

But it would argue either very great Weakness or Perverseness, to infer from such Expressions, the Necessity of an absolute Freedom from all impure Mixture in the present Life. For this is an Attainment so impossible in its own Nature, so contrary to the Experience of the most eminent Christians, and so entirely inconsistent with the Vicissitude, Trial, and Affliction which attend us thro' this World, that no sober considerate Man can imagine, that a Book, divinely inspired, would affirm it to be necessary.

This, it is apprehended, is sufficiently intimated by Sir Rush, when comparing the Growth and Proportions of the Spiritual to those of the Natural Man. For, as the NATURAL Man, when come to Maturity, may yet, by Exercise and Study, and other proper Methods, confirm and add to the Strength both of his Body and Mind; so may He, who, in this Sense, is spiritually perfect, make daily Increase in Faith and Knowledge, by converting much with the Scriptures, by holy Contemplations, Acts of Piety and Virtue, and all those excellent Actions, whereby they, (who make it their Aim and Business, to excell in Goodness,) do improve and brighten the Glory of God in their Souls.

Serm. XLVI.

4 On imitating the Perfections of God.

all, vastly short even of that equalized Perfection,
which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ; who
“have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is
“not in us.” Nor does it exhibit any other Character
to our View, except that of our Lord, without apprizing
us of its Imperfections, as well as its Excellencies.

Is ABRAHAM applauded for his Faith, JOB for his
Patience, or MOSES for his Meekness? Their Mistakes
are also faithfully reported, and even their Failures in
those very Graces for which they were so much renowned.
And he who reads the History of the New Testa-
ment, will see many Blemishes in the Characters of
the Apostles; while he is obliged to acknowledge them,
upon the Whole, Men of strict Integrity and exalted
Piety. And even as to Christ, tho' his Character hath
no Defect in it, and it is unquestionably our Duty to
imitate it; yet our being required to “follow him,”
does not oblige us to an exact Resemblance of him,
but only to use our utmost Endeavours to that End.

Perfection, then, &c. ~~etc.~~ (under)

Summit of Perfection itself; but a striving after it.
The Perfection of a Christian is to strive AFTER Per-
fection, is to be “temperate in all things, that he
may gain the Mastery;” - p. 9 (according to the A-
postle); is, a “going on to Perfection.”

This

(*) Perfection in Man, is to be understood in a comparative and
qualified Sense. It is such a Perfection as is proportioned to our
Nature & Strength. Every Being is then perfect in its Kind, when
it has the Perfections proper to its State and Conditions: in this
Sense it is said of Noah, that “He was a just Man, and perfect in
his Generation;” this informed the Perfection required of Abra-
ham; when God appeared unto him, and commanded him to walk
before him and be perfect; thus again is said of Job, that “He
was a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth
Evil;” and this is the sense of the saying of the Prophets, that “The
Lord delighted in Job before he was created.”

This, it is apprehended, is sufficiently intimated by St Paul when comparing the Growth and Proportions of the spiritual to those of the natural Man. For, as the natural Man, when come to Maturity, may yet, by Exercise and Study, and other proper Methods, confirm and add to the Strength both of his Body and Mind; so may He, who, in this Sense, is spiritually perfect, make daily Increase in Faith and Knowledge, by conversing much with the Scriptures, by holy Contemplations, Acts of Piety and Virtue, and all those excellent Arts, whereby they, (who make it their Aim and Business, to excell in Goodness,) do improve and heighten the Grace of God in their Souls.

In a Word, This is a Perfection, which supposes a Measure, short of which we cannot be Men in Christ; but not a Measure, at which they, who are once arrived, either ought nor to aspire, or cannot rise above it. This, it is imagined, is the full Import of the Word PERFECTION, particularly of Man as a Creature, who ought to be continually aspiring after, and striving to attain higher Degrees of Virtue and Goodness, and who is not properly perfect, till he attains a perfect State in Heaven. But,

II. I am to show how far we His Creatures are so

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resemblable

4 On imitating the Perfections of God.

All, vastly more even of that exaltr'd Perfection, which the Human Nature in our best P[er]f[ec]tions, "have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." Nor does it exhibit any other Character to our View, except that of our Lord, without apprising us of its Imperfections, as well as its Excellencies.

Is ABRAHAM applauded for his Faith, JOB for his Patience, or MOSES for his Meekness? Their Mistakes are also faithfully reported, and even their Failures in those very Graces for which they were so much renowned. And he who reads the History of the New Testament, will see many Blemishes in the Characters of the Apostles; while he is obliged to acknowledge them, upon the Whole, Men of strict Integrity and exalted Piety. And even as to Christ, tho' his Character hath no Defect in it, and it is unquestionably our Duty to imitate it; yet our being required to "follow him," does not oblige us to an exact Resemblance of him, but only to use our utmost Endeavours to that End.

Perfection, then, &c. ~~q~~ (under)

Summit of Perfection itself; but a Striving after it. The Perfection of a Christian is to strive after Perfection, is to be "temperate in all things, that he may gain the Mastery;" - p[ro]p[rietary] (according to the Apostle,) is, a "going on to Perfection."

This was a perfect and upright Man; one that feared God and eschewed Evil; and the wife of ZACHARIAH and ELIJAH; and in all the Commandments of Ordinances of the divine M[an]ifestation. The Perfection, then, (under) the Religion, is indeed of Virtue.

The Perfection required of Christians, is the Perfection of Men, and not of Angels. But then let it be remembered, that it is not the Perfection of mere natural Men, who are ignorant of the Will of God, and unassisted by the Light of Revelation; but of those who

This, it is apprehended, is sufficiently intimated by St. Paul, when comparing the Growth and Proportions of the spiritual to those of the natural Man. For, as the NATURAL Man, when come to Maturity, may yet, by Exercise and Study, and other proper Methods, confirm and add to the Strength both of his Body and Mind; so may He, who, in this Sense, is spiritually perfect, make daily Increase in Faith and Knowledge, by conversing much with the Scriptures, by holy Contemplations, Acts of Piety and Virtue, and all those excellent Actions whereby they, (who make it their Aim and Business to excell in Goodness,) do improve and brighten the Glory of God in their Souls.

Thirdly, Word. This is a Perfection, which supposes a Measure, short of which we cannot be Men in Christ; but not a Measure, at which they, who are born again, either ought not to aspire, or cannot rise above it. Now, this is the full Import of the Word PERFECTION, particularly of MAN as a Creature, who ought so to be continually aspiring after, and striving to obtain higher Degrees of Virtue and Goodness, and who is not properly perfect, till he becomes a perfect Saint in Heaven. But,

III. I am to show how far we His Creatures are to resemble

4 On imitating the Perfections of God.

all, vastly short even of that exalted Perfection,
which he himself has placed in us all.
“have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is
“not in us.” Nor does it exhibit any other Character
to our View, except that of our Lord, without appriz-
ing us of its Imperfections, as well as its Excellencies.

Is ABRAHAM applauded for his Faith, JOS for his Patience, or MOSES for his Merit? Their Mistakes are also faithfully reported, and even their Failures in those very Graces for which they were so much renowned. And he who reads the History of the New Testament, will see many Blemishes in the Characters of the Apostles; while he is obliged to acknowledge them, upon the Whole, Men of strict Integrity and exalted Piety. And even as to Christ, tho' his Character hath no Defect in it, and it is unquestionably our Duty to imitate it; yet our being required to "follow him," does not oblige us to an exact Resemblance of him, but only to use our utmost Endeavours to that End.

Perfection, then, &c. ~~not~~ (under) with paper, &c.

Summit of Perfection itself, but a striving after it.

who are blessed with the Light of the Gospel, and who have all the Means of Grace afforded them. It is a Perfection worthy of Christians, an Obedience proportioned to the great Advantages they enjoy. It implies the best Improvement we can make of the Talents committed to our Charge; a sincere and earnest Endeavour to carry our Obedience as far as we can.

This, It is apprehended, is sufficiently intimated by St Paul, when comparing the Growth and Proportions of the spiritual to those of the natural Man. For, as the NATURAL Man, when come to Maturity, may yet, by Exercise and Study, and other proper Methods, confirm and add to the Strength both of his Body and Mind; so may He, who, in this Sense, is spiritually perfect, make daily Increase in Faith and Knowledge, by conversing much with the Scriptures, by holy Contemplations, Acts of Piety and Virtue, and all those excellent Actions, whereby they, (who make it their Aim and Business, to excell in goodness,) do improve and brighten the Glory of God in their Souls.

In a Word, This is a Perfection, which supposes a Measure, short of which we cannot be Men in Christ; but not a Measure, at which they, who are earnestly striving, either ought not to aspire, or cannot rise above it. This, in its import, is the full Import of the Word PERFECTION, particularly of MAN as a Creature, who ought to be continually aspiring after, and striving to obtain higher Degrees of Virtue and Goodness, and who is not properly perfect, till he becomes a perfect Saint in Heaven. But,

II. I am to show how far we the Creatures are so
Serm.XLVI.

6 On imitating the Perfections of God.

resemble the Perfections of God; our Creator.

God, being infinitely full of all possible Perfection, whatever we discover in his Nature that is communicable to ours, we ought to follow and imitate it, as our Sovereign Pattern and Example.

Tho the Words before us do, in themselves, suppose the absolute Perfections of God, which are incomunicable; yet we, as Creatures, are utterly incapable of them; These, therefore, tho seemingly implied, cannot be supposed to be intended as a Pattern to us.

His incomunicable Perfections, such as his Immutability, Infinity, Omnipotence, and the like, are so far from being the Patterns of our Imitation, that they are beyond the Comprehension of finite Capacities; and, for a Man to pretend to be like God in these, would not only be the highest Presumption, but the greatest Absurdity; insomuch as it betrays our Ignorance of the Bounds and Limits of our own State, as we are Creatures; and of God, who is so highly exalted.

We must not, therefore, by any Means, think to resemble God in the Excellencies of which our Nature is utterly incapable. — This was the Sin of Satan and the apostate Angels; — An Ambition to "Step into the Throne of God," and so "like the Most-High." —

how far required.

The then, the Words themselves seem to propose as the incomparably Perfections of God. But the Context excludes them; for, the Words before are the Conclusion which our Saviour draws from those Precepts which were of greater Perfection, and any Laws that were extant in the World before. "I say unto you, Love your Enemies." — "Bless them that curse you, — Do good to them that hate you, — and pray for them that despise, or fully use you, or persecute you;" And, to persuade them hereof, He proposes to them the Pattern of the divine Perfection, telling them, that in being thus kindly affected towards their Enemies, they resembled God, and became "the Children of the Most-High, who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust." — Indeed, further to press it to them, he tells them, that if they were not thus kindly affected to their Enemies, and those that have been injurious to them, that they were so far from being like God, that they were but just Level with the worst of Men. For,

"If ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same: And, if ye hate your Brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?"

Serm. XLVII. 107 (A) 108 (A) And

§ On imitating the Perfections of God.

And then concludes, that if we would attain that Perfection which the Christian Religion designs to advance Men to, we must endeavour to be like God in the Perfections of his Goodness, Mercy, and Patience, and the like.

So that, in our Imitation of the divine Perfections, we are to keep within the Station of Creatures, not vainly affecting an Independency and Sovereignty like the Most-High, and to be omnipotent as he is, to "have an Arm like God, and to thunder with a Voice like him?" but to endeavour to resemble him according to the Rate and Capacity of Creatures in those divine Qualities, and in such Measures and Degrees, as our finite dependent State and Nature is capable of — more especially and chiefly, (as we have observed,) in the Moral Perfections of the divine Nature, such as are His Goodness and Mercy, his Patience, his Justice, Truth, Faithfulness, and the like, which the Scripture seems to comprehend under the Name of Holiness.

These all, being the Dictates of perfect and infallible Reason, ought to be copied after by all reasonable Creatures — the Perfection of whose Nature consists in acting as right Reason directs. (A)

(A) See Note (A) Vol. III. page 383.

These Perfections, the holy Angels are always
contemplating in the divine Nature, and are no af-
flictionally endeavouring to transcribe in their own
condition, therefore, ought to resemble their Muster,
and more than they are the Children of God, by a
Participation of his Proprieties. For instance, saith
St. Bernard, "the Lord is just and righteous in all
his ways ;" we ought to be righteous in all manner
of Conversation ; — because, he is so abundant in
Truth ; therefore, we should speak no falsehood
one to another, but it every Man the Truth from
the Heart." — Bernard, "God is merciful, Long-
Suffering, Keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving
Iniquity and Transgression ;" — because "his Com-
passions fail not, but his Mercy endureth forever ;"
— therefore, "should we be merciful, as our Father
also is merciful," to gainesM our selfe.

When God says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," it
signifies that we are to imitate God in his Good-
ness, Mercy, Patience, Righteousness, Faithfulness,
and Truth ; for these are the Holiness of the divine
Nature, and which let him at the greatest Distance
from that which we call moral impurity and Sin.

In a Word, Whatever we attribute to God, as
his Excellency and Perfection, (that is communicable
to ours,) THAT we should propose to ourselves, is
Serm. XLVI.

Matter

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Matter of Practice and Imitation.

Is That, therefore, which our Saviour here more particularly recommends to our imitation, his three Goodnesses of God; of which his Mercy and Patience are two eminent Branches. The Article of inference, "Therefore," hath a plain Relation to establishing going harder, which were the Virtues of Love and Brotherly-Kindness. *Et quod si* — *Si* — *So that,* though the universal Perfection of the Divine-Nature be here supposed; yet the Attributes of this Goodness, Mercy, and Patience, are here particularly pointed at, to be proposed for our Pattern, and our Imitation is so to be especially understand of them. *Et* — *Second —*, notwithstanding *ipsa propria* — *from what hath been thus said, will plainly appear;*

Thirdly, The true Meaning of the Precept, and thence Dury required, is very impossible to us. We have already shewn, that our Imitation of God is to be restrained to such of his Perfections as Creatures are capable of; and that even here, his incommunicable Perfections are yet further to be restrained to such Degrees & Measures as are within our Attainment; for no Creature can ever be so perfectly Good as God is, nor partake of any other Excellency in that transcendent Degree in which

And so it is indeed impossible.

The Divine Nature stands possessed of it; Under this View the Possibility of the thing is too evident to be disputed. Add to this, that the Perfection of the Powers is also the most likely to have the greatest and best Effect upon us, to excite us to continual Improvement, and to make us do the utmost we are able; which, therefore, when we so endeavor, it will be accepted with God for the real Completeness.

What, therefore, clears this Matter, is, that the Precept doth not oblige us to come up to a perfect Equality with the Pattern proposed us, but only imports a sincere and steady imitation of it, that we perpetually strive after higher Degrees of Perfection, advancing from one Degree of Goodness to another, like the "Shining Light, which shineth more and more unto perfect Day," and that we continually aspire after a nearer Resemblance to God.

This, which is the whole Intent and Meaning of the Precept before us, is certainly possible to us. We surely can endeavour after the Righteousness & Holiness of God, tho' but in a weak and imperfect State. (A)

And this weak and still half完備的 and as it were, ^{and A} Religion, (according to the ancient Greek Fathers,) is our ^{the} Christian, ^{and to} ^{the} ^{the} Likeness of God according to the Proportion of Man.

Serm. XLVI. To alledge the two lastest Notes.

12 On imitating the Perfections of God.

An Equality with God, even in the commutable Attributes of his Nature, is not only impossible to us in this State of Sin and Imperfection; but above the Condition of a Creature; or even of the "Spirits of just Men made perfect;" or of the highest Angels in Glory: for, their Perfection is not absolute, but in Comparison with our present State; "They, though "they continually behold the Face of their Father," are still writing after his Copy, and endeavouring after his Perfection." But, Be that as it will, this is certain, that an Equality with God in any of his Perfections, is not to be obtained by us here; a sincere Endeavour after it only is meant by our Saviour; & this, if it be our Care, we need not doubt but it will be accepted by God, and that he will forgive wherein we fall-short of

As the moral Perfections of the Deity afford us the truest Image of Holiness and Purity, so are they the best Patterns to place before our Eyes for the Conduct of our own Lives. — It is praise-worthy to imitate a Perfection as far as we are able, though we can never hope to come up to the great Original: And tho' there is no Room to exact Men to be perfect as God is perfect, yet it is reasonable to press them to imitate their Heavenly Father. For, neither he who adviseth the Imitation, nor he who attempts it, go upon the Supposition, that it is either necessary or possible to be as perfect as He: But this they both agree in, that the nearer any one can come to the Pattern, the more perfect he will be; and therefore, the Imitation of God has not for its End the attaining the Perfections of God, but the attaining to the greatest Perfection we are capable of. 17. IX. 1712.

the Perfection of that Pattern which is impossible
for us to imitate so Exactly. And, though
it would be best for us, if this was all the
Ground of our Fear and Trouble; for, so far were we
from thoroughly endeavouring truly to copy after
him, and being what we ought to be, than we are far
from being what we might be. Would we but
see God more frequently before us, and present to
ourselves his most excellent and amiable Perfections,
we should, doubtless, be far better than we are in
many, if not in every Respect; for, his Perfections,
daily reflected upon and improved, would naturally
induce us, (according to our Capacity,) to a Con-
formity in our Conduct to him.

We are, therefore, inexcusable if we are not led by
this, to the Practice of every Virtue; indeed, not
only inexcusable, but wretched and miserable; for,
unless we be wiser than him, we cannot see him as
he is: for, "without Holiness no Man shall see him;
it is only the pure in heart, that shall see God." To
every Man therefore, that hath this Hope in
him, I should purify himself even as God is pure; & so
endeavour after all his imitable Perfections. For,
it is our Mockery to discourse of the Supreme
Being, tho ever so properly, if we pay no Respect
to his Authority: - to debase all his Attributes, but
Serm. XLVI. regard

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regard none of them : — and while we contemplate his Perfections, neither to love, nor fear, nor resemble him. — How much superior, in this Case, is the meanest, most illiterate Ruffick, so as, who is faithful, just and merciful ? The Wild Savage, who does, by Nature, the things contained in the Law ? — and the Heretic, who holds his Mistakes with Modesty, and adds not Immorality to his Errors ?

"Thou believest that there is a God ; thou doest well ! the Devils also believe and tremble." If our Life be bad, the very APOTATE Spirits, are as religious as we, and we have Reason to be sensible of all their Apprehensions ; the same Faith should be productive of the same Fears ; We too may "believe and tremble."

Therefore, the Command before us is not to understand in the utmost Strictness of the Letter, of the Extent and Excellency of the divine Perfections, which cannot be attained by us ; yet we are to endeavour after it, all we can ; in which Sense it is not impossible to us. It is not intent that we should arrive to such a Perfection of Holiness, as is fit to compare with that of the Almighty, but only that we strive to imitate it, to as great a Degree as the Weakness

Weakness of our Nature will permit, that we reflect frequently upon it, and make the Consideration of it a powerful Incentive to the Exertion of our best, tho' weak Endeavours, following, as well as we can, the Steps of our Heavenly Father, tho' it be with ever so unequal a Pace. For,

Anxious as the Distance is between him that made us, & us his sinful Creatures, yet we must not despair of being, by Degrees, our Conduct & Disposition in some Measure to resemble his, so equal it, in any Sense, is impossible; but we may arrive at a small, though distant Likeness,

In our Duty, at all Times, to place the great Original before our Eyes, attentively to consider it, and which all we can, copy after it in LITTLE: for, we cannot but be sensible, how that after all our Endeavours, the Justness of the Proportion must greatly suffer, and the Resemblance be extremely faint and imperfect, — Tho' we cannot reach to that Perfection of Holiness which is in the Divine Nature, yet we may have that Holiness in Truth in which his Image doth consist, which is the utmost which God, in this imperfect State, expects from us.

Having thus explained the Nature & due Limits of the Duty before us, & vindicated the Possibility of it according to it's just Acceptation, I shall, in the next Sermon, conclude

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Conclude with such Inferences as shall result from what hath been said. As,

First, Is God perfect? Then doth it become us, his Creatures, to follow him according to our Ability, and "perfect Holiness in the Fear of God."

The wiser Heathens were directed, by the Light of Reason, to place their Religion in the Imitation of the Deity whom they worshipped.

Real Acquaintance with God will have this Effect, — it is natural to suppose it. — Preach that walketh with wise Men, will be wise. — Frequent Converse with God, in the Way of his Nature, and our Duty consequent on it, will render us like him; And, to make high Pretences to Fellowship with God, without a proportionable Likeness to him, is the grossest Hypocrisy.

"He is Light, & in him is no Darkness at all: (v.) if, therefore, we say we have Fellowship with him, and yet walk in Darkness," (i.e.) live wickedly, "we lie, and do not the Truth." Ab

(A) Among the many Methods by which revealed Religion has advanced Morality, this is One, that it hath given us a more just and perfect Idea of that Being whom every reasonable Creature ought to imitate. And that whereas there were former sayings, but might be countenanced by those Notions of the Deity which prevailed among the common People in the Heathen World, reduced Religion sets forth a proper Obj^t. for our Imitation in that Being who is the Perfect, as well as the Source of all Spiritual Perfection.

As God is perfectly possessed of all Perfection, our Saviour, therefore, refers us to him for Example of Imitation; the Excellency of which Pattern, as it leaveth Room for continual Improvement, so it kindles Ambition in us, and causes us to contend to the utmost.

—*Tho' a Man can never hope to equal the perfect Example of God, yet he will endeavour to come as near it as he can, well knowing that a perfect Pattern is no Hindrance, but rather an Advantage to our Improvement in every Grace.* (A)

The truest and most substantial Practice of Religion consists in the Imitation of the divine Perfections, especially the moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, which the Scripture usually comprehends under the Name of Holiness, such as are the Goodness, Mercy, and Patience of God, such as are his Justice, Truth, and Faithfulness. To imitate God in these, is true Religion INDEED; or, (as St. James expresseth it,) is “Religion, pure and undefiled.”

True Religion is to imitate him whom we worship.

(A) The most finished Model should always be proposed as a Criterion; and there must be a fixed Point of Perfection settled, before we can calculate the Degrees of Deficiency or Variation from it.

Omnis praeceptio fuit, ut gloriam facias.

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Thip. This the Heathens, by the Light of Nature, discovered to be the true End of Religion; that "the best Worship of God is to be like him."

Plutarch, discoursing of the Patience of God towards Sinners, gives this as one Reason why God doth not presently punish Offenders, [viz]: "That he might thereby give an Example to us of Gentle-ness and Patience, and check the Fury and Violence of Men, in revenging themselves one upon another;" which nothing will more effectually do than a Consideration of the divine Gentle-ness and Forbearance to us upon our manifold & great Offences. Again he says, "God manifesteth himself, and displays his Perfections in the World before us, that we may be led by them, to imitate and resemble him."

So that the Light of Nature, and the Reason of Mankind, have always placed the Perfection of Religion in the Imitation of the divine Excellencies; the Holy Scriptures, in Sense and Language, altogether agreeing in the same, every where making the Practice of Religion to consist in a Conformity to God: the Laws which he hath given us being nothing else but a Transcript of his Nature.

The great Business of Religion is to do the Will of God; and "this is Will of God, even our Sanctification;" & our Sanctification is our Conformity to his Holiness.

This

This is the Scope of the general Exhortations of Scripture to perswade us to Holinesse, (i.e.) to an Imitation of the moral Perfections of the divine Nature; As, "Having therefore, dearly Beloved, these Promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit, **PERFECTING Holiness in the Fear of God.**" And, "As he who hath called us is holy, so be ye holy in all Manner of Conversation;" for, it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The Holiness which the Gospel designeth for, is, — Participation of the divine Nature, which we can — no otherwise partake of, but by an Imitation of the — divine Perfections. This is that which the Scripture expresseth to us under the several Terms of Regeneration, the New-Man, and the New-Creature. Those, therefore, who are converted from a wicked and sinful State, and are reclaimed to Goodness, are said to "put-on the New-Man, which, after God, is created in Righteousness and true Holiness;" — and, "to be renewed in the Image of him that created us." — To imitate and resemble God in our Dispositions and Manners, is to be the Sons of God, and the Children of the Most-High. **Be ye, therefore, Followers of God as dear Children,**

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dren, that ye may be blameless and undefiled, and sincere as the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked & perverse Generation; amongst whom we are to shine as Lights in the World;" for, "in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil: He that doth Righteousness is born of God;" but he that doth Wickedness is of the Devil.

There have been great Enquiries concerning the Marks of a Child of God, and they have been multiplied without Number: whereas it lies in a short Compass, and is plainly this, which, in Effect, comprehends all others: [viz] our Imitation and Resemblance of God in those Perfections wherein he is set forth to us as a Pattern; and in this chiefly consists the Practice both of natural Religion, & of revealed true Christianity. But,

It may here be asked, Doth not Religion, in great Part, consist in the Exercise of Piety and Devotion, and in the Duties of God's Worship and the like?

To this we answer, that Religion doth very much consist in the due Performance of these Duties, and they are unquestionable and necessary Parts of Religion, and the Means appointed by God for the begotten and increasing in us such Dispositions of Mind as render us most like to God, and for the

Projection of all the Fruits of Holiness in our Lives. But, then,

It is to be considered that these Exercises of Piety and Devotion are but the Means of Religion, and not the ultimate End and Design of it. All these do but serve to bring us to a nearer Resemblance of God, and, where they fail of this End, and are performed for their own Sakes only, and we rest in them, without aiming at anything further, they lose their Nature, and become of no Efficacy to us; and this, because they are not used as Means, but affected in as if they were the whole and ultimate End of Religion. And, it is to be feared that there are many who fall into this fatal Mistake, and think that if they do but serve God in the outward Ceremonies of Religion, that, therefore, "all is well," and that they are truly religious, and very good; when, at the same Time, they take no Care to improve themselves in real Goodness, by an inward Conformity of their Minds to the Nature of God, and the real Reformation and Agreement of their Lives, by mortifying their Lusts, & subduing their depraved Appetites & Passions, to the Laws of Reason and Religion, by "putting-on, as the Elect of God," Bowels of Kindness, and Compassion, by being true and faithful, righteous and just, patient and merciful,

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"merciful, even as their Father, which is in Heaven, also is ; and by "forbearing one another" in Case of Provocation, and in "forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us," By purifying themselves as he is pure," and endeavouring to "be holy in all Manner of Conversation, as he who hath called them is holy."

The Performance of all EXTERNAL Duties, and the Use of all the Means, when separated ; (as but too often they are,) from that which is the great End of Religion, [viz] the Conformity of ourselves to the Likeness of God in those Qualities and Dispositions which have been mentioned, is so far from finding Acceptance with God, that, contrary-wise, it is an Abomination to him.

So God every where declares in Scripture, telling us, "that the Prayer of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord," — that he despairs to be praised by Men of unhallowed Lips & profane Lives ; and that unless with the Praises which we offer him, we "order our Conversation aright, we shall not see the Salvation of God."

With what Contempt doth he speak of all formal external Religion, without the Power of it upon our Lives and Conversations ?

To what Purpose, (saith the Lord,) is the Multitude

Standards of your Sacrifice to me?" "Bring no more
such Oblations, Incense is an Abomination to me." "
Your Sabbaths, you even your solemn Assemblies,
I cannot stay with;" for ye are they that regard
Iniquity in your Hearts." and "Behold then, to obey is better than Sacrifice, and
to hearken (so as to do the Will of God,) better
than the Fat of Rams;" yes, "he hath shewed thee,
O Man, what is Good:" and "what doth the Lord
require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, &
to walk humbly with thy God." And can any man, then, think that ~~empty~~ is Religion
which hath no vital Principles within it, nor Effect
upon the Lives of Men? "If any Man among you seemeth to be religious,
and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own
Heart, that Man's Religion is vain."

"Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the
the Father is this, to visit the Widows and Father-
less in their Afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted
from the World."

When Religion produceth these real Effects, then
the Means of it do truly serve the End of it, and we
are "not only Hearers of the Word, but Doers of it,
and consequently shall be blessed in our Deed."

So that, as there is an Obligation upon us to use
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the Means of Religion, (which God hath instituted,) with great Care and Conscience, so we should chiefly regard THAT which is the End of all Religion, which is to make us "Partakers of the Divine Nature," and renders us like to God, especially in those amiable & excellent Qualities of his, which are his Glory and Perfection, such as are his Benignity and Goodness, his Mercy and Forbearance.

The Scriptures, indeed, set us the Pattern of the holy Angels for our Obedience, but they propose only the Holiness of the Father, and the Son, to be the Object of our Imitation, as being both the best of Patterns, and the highest Motives to a Life of Holiness and true Piety. For,

What can be more excellent and noble, than to live by the Example of the Deity? What can so advance our Nature, as to "be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect?"

This Exhortation may be enforced from diverse Considerations, [viz] as we shall hereby gain the Love and Esteem, the Favour and Friendship of God, and as we hereby bring Honour to him; besides the Excellency it reflects upon us, and the Necessity of it in Order to our Enjoyment of, & Communion with him.

First, we shall hereby gain the Love and Esteem, the Favour and Friendship of God. As

or the God, as fully created Man after the Image of
himself in death he now creates the New-Man af-
ter the Image of his Purity. If therefore we con-
sider that they who sincerely endeavour after it, are
the fittest Transcribers of his own truth holy and pure
Nature, the genuine power of God's love towards
them for Parity of Nature, avouches spiritual Plea-
sure indeed. Similitude is the Ground of Love, this
renders us obedient Children, &c so must qualify us,
not only for his Affection, as a tender Father, but
also for his great Reward, as the righteous, Conqueror
and Judge of all the Earth.

Even under the Mosaic Dispensation this was
the first Rule with God with them, that honour me;"
(which we can only do, most effectually, by limit-
ing his Perfections). "I will honour you." And they
that despise me;," (which we especially do by de-
parting from him,) " shall be lightly esteemed."
This also is our Encouragement to yield Obedi-
ence to the Precepts of the Holy Jesus, [viz] "If
any Man serve me, him will my Father honour."
-i-Ap. i. The Advantage of having God for our
Friend, to be assured that he loves & will honour us,
is a Blessing unspeakable; For, who can utter the
Kindness he can do to those whom he truly re-
gards? But further, i. i. it will also be a comfort
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Besides

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¶ Besides the Advantage from the Love of God to us on this Account, our Duty lieth to be further enforced from the Honour it bringes to his Holy Name.

As an earthly Father is more honoured when he is imitated by his Son in his conspicuous Virtues, than when he hath only the Praised of his Tongue; so is our heavenly Father honoured not so much by the Labour of our Lips or outward Services, as by that inward Purity by which we become like unto him in our Nature, and even receive the Life of God;

By this we honour him in that Perfection which is dearest to Him, & is the very Essence & Glory of his Nature. By this we make a great Declaration that he is the best and most available of Beings, accounting nothing besides him ylluable and worthy of imitation. But further,

This Life of Holiness, (in Imitation of the divine Perfections,) keeps up the Reputation of Religion and of God in the World, and attracts others to the Love both of him and it. We hereby evidence, that a Religion, which begets such an excellent Spirit in us, is worthy of all Acceptation; and that Holy is that God, who hath prescribed such admirable Rules for right Living, whose Precepts

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tend so manifestly to the Advancement of the human Nature & to the Transformation of it into the Likeness of the Deity.

Upon which Account it is observable, what we have never said or commanded, in the New-Testament, to glorify God, only by our Admiration of his Divine Perfections, or by any pompous Service whatever; but only by those things, who whilom transform to the Holiness and imitable Perfections of his Nature.

Hereby, (saith our Blessed Saviour,) is my Father honoured, when ye bear much Fruit. The Way to glorify our Heavenly Father, is, by our good Works shining before Men, by being filled with these "Fruits of Rightcounsel, which are by Jesus Christ to the Praise and Glory of God"; by shewing-forth the Virtues of him, who hath called us from Darkness into his most marvelous Light.

But further, Not only the Advantage of Rightcounsel and true Holiness to us, (in Imitation of the Divine Perfections,) and the Honour we hereby bring to God; but also the Excellency it reflects upon us, further enforces it to us.

The Saints, (i.e.) those who best imitate God, are styled the EXCELLENT of the Earth. Earthly Pomp and Greatness may make Men honourable in the

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Eyes of a mistaken and injudicious World : but it is only "the Ornament of a Good & Virtuous Mind, which renders even the King's Daughter, all-glorious within." *Ad idem*

Supreme Authority may give some faint Resemblance of the Greatness and Majesty of God ; but it is the **RIGHTOUS** Person only who is the truest Emblem of Holiness ; and upon that Account, is said to "live the Life of God, and to shew-forth his Virtues in it." And,

If it be a great Honour to resemble Princes, even only in OUTWARD Features and Appearance ; what Honour must it be to be the LIVING Image of the Deity, and to resemble him in the more noble Qualities and Virtues of an holy Soul ? But further,

Let us consider the absolute Necessity of this, in Order to our present, as well as future Happiness ; seeing we can have no Communion or Fellowship with God without it. For, "What Communion is there betwixt Light and Darkness ; or what Concord hath Christ with Belial ?" In Order to our Fellowship with God HERE, we must have a Communion with him in the things which belong to our Peace ; for, "into a defiled Soul the Spirit of God will not enter, nor dwell in the Body that is subject to Sin ;" whereas, "if we walk in Light, as He is also in

in the Light, we have been Fellowship with him?" "If therefore, we say that we have Communion with God, & yet walk in Darkness," (i.e.) do Deeds of Iniquity, & walk contrary to his Nature, "we lie and do not speak the Truth;" for, this is a fixt and unalterable Rule, that an holy God can have no Fellowship with unholy Persons. But further,

"We can have no Enjoyment of him, nor Portion with God hereafter without this Conformity to him; for, it is not the Place, but Similitude of Temper that will cause reciprocal Pleasure (A) — Heaven is in Scripture represented as "an Inheritance among them that are SANCTIFIED," and the "Inheritance of the Saints in Light;" so that before we can enjoy it, we must be qualified and prepared for it.

Could we, then, in Imagination, place a Sinner even in Heaven, yet what would he propose to do there? for, enjoy it he could not; as his Disposition is so intirely opposite to it's Perfection.

In nothing, therefore, is the peculiar Wisdom & Benignity of our God more conspicuous, than in this, that the Performance of what is commanded, not only INSTRUCTS us, but QUALIFIES us to enjoy the promised Inheritance. — It especially concerns

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"us therefore, to "mortify our Lusts which are upon the Earth," inasmuch as they are contrary to the Joys and Felicities of Heaven, and the Nature of that God who reigns there; whose "Kingdom is not Meat & Drink; but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost," — In a Word, Who is himself the Fountain of all Happiness; in a Resemblance to whom, consequently, all Happiness must have it's Rise.

Till our Passions, therefore, be subdued, and our Souls dispossessed of those ungodlike Qualities of Hatred & Malice, of Revenge and Impatience; & till we be endued with the Spirit of universal Goodness and Charity, (In Imitation of the God of Heaven,) we are not fit Company for our heavenly Father, nor are we qualified to dwell with God, or take any Pleasure in Converse with him; for (as we have observed,) it is not the Place, but Conformity of Temper that causeth reciprocal Pleasure.

God is Love, & dwells in Love; we must, therefore, "be Followers of God, as dear Children, and walk in Love," if ever we will dwell with him.

So far, therefore, as we are defective in these divine Qualities and Perfections, so far shall we fall short of the due Temper requisite to Happiness, & consequently of Happiness itself.

There

There is a direct Opposition between the holy God and the evil Dispositions of wicked Men; and till this Opposition be removed, it is impossible that there can be any Agreement between them. Now, The Nature of God is fixed and unchangeable; It with him there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.

God cannot recede from his own Perfections, the Change, therefore, must be in us, & we must quit our Sins.

Let us, therefore, "cast-off every Weight, and every Sin, that so easily besets us, & let us run with Patience the Race which is set before us;" and having the greatest Example of Perfection before us, let us, (as far as we are able,) strive to copy after it, and "cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God." Upon the Whole,

All Imitation of God, must be understood to be an Imitation of his MORAL Attributes only, and not of his NATURAL ones. In the Exercise of his Supreme Power, we cannot imitate him: In the Extent of his unerring Knowledge, we cannot attain to any Similitude with him: nor are we able to search-out and comprehend, the least Part of the Depth of his unfathomable Wisdom. But his Holiness

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perfection and Goodness, his Justice, Righteousness; and Truth, his Mercy and Compassion; these things we can understand; in these things we can imitate him; indeed, we cannot approve ourselves to him as obedient Children, if we do not imitate him in them.

But, Even in these moral Excellencies, it is evident further, that it must necessarily mean, an Imitation of LIKENESS only, and not EQUALITY.

Some Enthusiasts there have been, who have vainly boasted themselves to be altogether without Sin; and being puffed-up with spiritual Pride, and thinking themselves above the Duties of what they call COMMON MORALITY, have by a Neglect of true Virtue, "fallen into the Snare and Condemnation of the Devil." Of This kind there seem to have been Some in St. John's Time, against whom he levels these Words, "If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." But, in our PRESENT Age, Men are apt to run much rather into the CONTRARY Extreme; not pretending to a Perfection above what is human, but neglecting to endeavour after what is their Duty to obtain. They know God to be a Being of infinite Holiness, - That he charges even his Angels with Purity, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight: And, therefore, they think THAT Men may be ex-
cused

called from attempting to imitate him at all. But This, is an evil Suggestion. For, though the Goodness, indeed, of such imperfect Creatures as We are, can be but in a very mean and low Degree; yet, in that Proportion and Degree, we are indispensably bound to follow after it. And as a Finite can resemble Infinite; so we are to resemble God, by partaking of the same moral Excellencies in Kind, though they cannot but be infinitely inferior in Degree. The Light of a Star, though it bears no Proportion at all to the glorious Beauty of the Sun, yet Light it is nevertheless, and directly contrary to Darkness: So the Virtues of Angels and of Men, though they bear no Proportion to the adorable Perfections of God; yet, in their proper Measure & Degree, they resemble them, as being of the same Nature and Kind; opposite and contrary to Wickedness, just as every degree of Light is contrary to Darkness. The Apostle aptly expresses THIS, by the Similitude of a Child learning to imitate the Virtues of a wise Man and an affectionate Parent; "Be ye, therefore, Followers of God, (saith he,) as Dear Children."

But, Though our Imitation of the moral Perfections of God, is always to be understood with these great Limitations; as signifying an Imitation of LIKENESS only, and not of EQUALITY; suitable to

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the

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the weak Nature of such frail, imperfect, and fallible Creatures: Yet ought we also to consider, that even in the DEGREES of Goodness it is our Duty continually to improve, if we will at all answer the Precept in the Text, & "be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect."

A perfect & most complete Example is set before us to imitate, that aiming always at THAT which is most excellent, we may grow continually and make a perpetual Progress in the Ways of Virtue; And though we can never come up to the Pattern itself yet, by such Imitation as our frail Nature is capable of, we may attain to what St. Peter calls, being "made Partakers of the Divine Nature." Which Participation of true Holiness "after the Image of him that created us," is truly and in a proper Sense the COMPARATIVE Perfection of our Human Nature, as absolute Perfection is the Perfection of the Divine. — This clearly explains the Meaning and Extent of St. Paul's Exhortation, that we should "perfect Holiness in the Fear of God;" and That Advice of our Saviour himself, in the Words before us, — "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

From what has been said, the following short Inferences offer themselves. As, First,

First, **True Religion** consists in the Imitation of God; and all Imitation of God, is, of Necessity, confined to his moral Perfections only; then, it hence evidently follows, that **Moral Virtue** is the chief End of Religion; and that to place the main Stress of Religion in any thing besides true Virtue, is Enthusiasm or Superstition.

Our Saviour, (in his Description of the Day of Judgment,) says, — “Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; Depart from me ye Workers of Iniquity!” (i.e.) all ye who have lived immorally upon the Earth. And St. Paul,

“ Though I speak, (says he,) with the Tongue of Men & Angels; Tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity,---- it profiteth me nothing.” But,

II. If true Religion consists in the Imitation of God, and that which imitable in God, be his MORAL PERFECTIONS; Hence it follows necessarily, that Moral Excellencies, [viz] Justice, Goodness, Truth, & the like, are of the same Kind in GOD as in MEN.

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For otherwise, if, (as some have imagined, in Order to maintain unintelligible Doctrines,) Justice, Goodness, and Truth in God, did not answer our common and natural Notions of those Virtues, but were of a Kind quite different, and inconceivable to us; How then could Men be obliged to IMITATE they knew not what? Or, how could it become possible, in any Sense, to be "Holy as God is holy," if it could not be understood by us WHAT Holiness is? (A) The Truth, therefore, plainly is; As Light is Light, WHERESOEVER, and in what Degree soever it appears; and has no Communion or Similitude with Darkness: So Goodness, in whomsoever, & in what Degree soever it be found, still always carries along with it, the same Idea of Goodness; & has no Communion or Fellowship with Wickedness. But,

Lastly, From hence it appears, of how great Importance it is to Men, to frame to themselves right and worthy Notions of God. For, such as are the Conceptions Men have, of the Object of their Worship; such also, proportionably, will be their own Behaviour and Practice.

The Gentiles, who worshiped vile & impure Deities, were themselves accordingly "given-up to work all Uncleanness with Greediness." The Jews,

(A) See Note (A) Vol. III. page 2, &c.

when they fell from the Worship of the true God, to serve the Idols and Images of really or fictitiously cruel Demons; were themselves accordingly divested of Humanity, and sacrificed even their own Children to Moloch. And, among Christians also, it is too true an Observation; that in Proportion as they have departed from the Simplicity of the Gospel, and feigned to themselves either ridiculous or wicked Notions of the infinitely wise & good God, so has their Religion accordingly been changed either into a ridiculous, or into a barbarous and cruel Superstition.

The only possible Remedy for which Evil, is to adhere steadfastly and immovably to the natural & unchangeable Notions of Righteousness and Holiness in God, and the indispensable Necessity of true Righteousness and Holiness among Men.

Sermon.

SERMON XLVII.

On Love to God

Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou Shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind."

It is the improved Ability of the Head, that forms the Philosopher; but it is the right Disposition of the Heart that chiefly makes the Christian. It is our Love directed to that Being who is most worthy of it; as the Centre, in which all Excellencies unite, and the Source from which all Blessings proceed.

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law." It is not the mere Action that is valuable in itself. It is the Love from which it proceeds, that stamps a Value upon it, and gives an endearing Charm and Beauty to it. When a servile Fear ingrosses the whole Man, it locks-up all the active Powers of the Soul; it cramps the Abilities, and is rather a Preservative against Sin, than an Incentive to Virtue. But Love quickens our Endeavours, and emboldens our Resolutions to please the Object beloved; & the more amiable Ideas

Ideas we entertain of our Master, the more cheerful, liberal, and animated the Service, that we render him, will consequently be.

Upon Love, therefore, the Scriptures have justly laid the greatest Stress, that Love, which will give Life and Spirit to our Performances. "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength." — "This is the FIRST & GREAT Commandment."

In discoursing on which Words, I shall, I. Inquire into the Nature and Foundation of our Love to God;

II. I shall endeavour to state the Measure and Degree of it; And then,

III. The strong Inducements to it. And, First, If we have clear and satisfying Evidences of the Being of God, of his Perfections natural and moral, of his having created all things which are, and of his Providence preserving them all, disposing the whole Series of Events with the most perfect Wisdom, and for the greatest Good, we can scarcely avoid this important Inquiry, [viz] "What Regards are due to Him from us his reasonable Creatures?"

Sermon. XLVII.

By

By looking into our Minds we shall perceive that they are differently affected with the Objects that are presented to them ; some excite Desire, some Joy, & others Horror and Aversion : But whatever Variety there is in them, they all originally belong to our Nature, and result from our Constitution and we cannot either make, or destroy them — It may be in our Power, by an habitual Attention to some Objects, to strengthen the Affections of the Mind to them, and by diverting that Attention from others, to weaken it's Affection to them, whereby the one obtains the Prevalence over the other, forming our Temper and engaging our Pursuit : but, the ORIGINAL Affections themselves are constituted by Nature, the same and invariable.

It is plain that the Nature of Man is so constituted, as to feel certain Affections upon the Sight or Contemplation of certain Objects. And the particular Affection to good Characters, Reverence and moral Love towards them, is natural to all those who have any Degree of real Goodness in themselves.

This might be illustrated by the Description of a perfect Character in a Creature ; and by considering the Manner, in which a good Man in his Presence would be affected towards him. He would of Course feel the Affections of Love, Reverence, Desire of his

, ^{MVIX} Approbation,

Approbation, or delight in the Hope or Consciousness of it. And surely, all this is applicable, and may be brought up to that Being, who is infinitely more than an adequate Object of all those Affections, whom we are commanded to "love with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind." And,

Of these Regards towards Almighty God, some are more particularly suitable to, and becoming to imperfect a Creature as Man in the present State; and some of them, & perhaps other Excesses of the Mind, will be the Employment and Happiness of good Men in a State of Perfection.

This is a general View of what the following Discourse will contain. And it is manifest the Subject is a real one: there is nothing in it enthusiastical or unreasonable. And if it be, indeed, at all a Subject, it is one of the utmost Importance. Accordingly,

The Duty of loving God, is in every Man's Mouth; but, upon what Ground it's Obligation is founded, and in what Particulars the rational Practice of it consists, is not so clearly and universally understood. Men often talk very earnestly of loving God, while at the same Time, in their Doctrine, they represent him as the most hateful Being in the Universe; cruel & partial, arbitrary, & tyrannical.

nical ; showing Favour to some, and making others miserable for no other Reason, but because he has absolute & irresistible Power. But, what such Persons speak concerning loving of God, is evidently nothing but mere Forms of empty Words, without any Meaning or Signification at all ; because there is in their Minds no real Object , upon which, the Love they speak of, can be fixed. And , where the " Root thus is Rottenness ; " (to use the Prophet Isaijah's Comparison,) what Wonder if " the Blossom , & the Fruit, accordingly go-up as the Dust ? " what Wonder , if the Expressions of their Love towards God, end in nothing but Peevishness, & Contention, if not Hatred to their Brethren ? (4) A true Love of God must be founded upon a right Sense of his Perfections, being really amiable in themselves, and beneficial to us : — And such a Love of God , will of Necessity show-forth itself, in our endeavouring to practise the same Virtues ourselves , and exercise them

(A) If Love towards God , be an obvious and principle Duty of Natural Religion, in those who believe God to be the Supreme Good ; it follows of Necessity , that Imitation of him also , most equally be a Duty of indispensable Obligation. For God, being essential Goodness, Righteousness and Truth , can no otherwise have Love expressed towards him from his Creatures, than by their loving & imitating those Virtues in their Practice, which in his Nature are essential Perfections. Love of God, in any other Sense than this, is nothing else but unat-
telligible Enthusiasm.

them towards others, which we profess to love and admire in Him.

All Perfection is lovely in itself, and amiable in the very Nature of the thing. (A) We are formed by Nature to admire what is great, and to love what is amiable. — Even inanimate Objects have Power to excite these Emotions. The magnificent Prospects of the natural World, fill the Mind with reverential Awe. Its beautiful Scenes create Delight. When we survey the Actions and Behaviour of our Fellow-Creatures, the Affections glow with greater Ardour; and if, to be unmoved in the former Case, argues a Defect of Sensibility in our Powers, it discovers in the latter, an odious Hardness & Depravity in the Heart. The Tenderness of an affectionate Parent, the Generosity of a forgiving Enemy

(A) There is an Apprehension and Esteem of moral Excellence, general to the human Soul; which does not apply to any thing which is not apprehended to be moral Excellence. It is in vain, therefore, to call-in the Assistance of foreign Motives, such as those taken from Interest, from the Hope of Happiness, or the Fear of Misery: These may strongly affect the Mind, and operate on the Springs of Action, preceding an earnest Pursuit; but the discerned Qualities of Objects themselves can only excite Affections to them. A Man may be convinced that it is for his Interest to have a particular Affection; but this cannot immediately produce it, nor have any other Effect towards it, than to engage his undivided Attention to the Object, till the exciting Qualities are apprehended; and as soon as they appear, the Affection naturally arises of itself. Serm. XLVII.

nemy, the Publick-Spirit of a Patriot, or an Hero, often fill the Eye with Tears, and swell the Heart with Emotions too big for Utterance.

The Object of these Affections is frequently raised above us, in Condition and Rank. Let us suppose him raised above us, in Nature. Let us imagine that an Angel, or any Being of superior Order, had condescended to be our Friend, our Guide and Patron; no one, surely, would hold the Exaltation of his Benefactor's Character, to be an Argument why he should love and reverence him the less. Strange! That the Attachment and Veneration, the Warmth and Over-flowing of Heart, which Excellence & Goodness on every other Occasion command, should then only be accounted irrational, when the Supreme Being becomes their Object.

For what Reason must human Sensibility be extinct towards him alone? Are all Benefits entitled to Gratitude, except the highest and the best? Shall Goodness cease to be amiable, only because it is perfect?

We own and feel the Force of amiable Qualities in our Fellow-Creatures, and can we be insensible to the Contemplation of perfect Goodness? Do we reverence the Shadows of Greatness here below? Are we solicitous about Honour and Esteem, and

the Opinion of the World : and shall we not feel the same with Respect to him , whose are Wisdom and Power in their Original , who “ is the God of Judgment , and by whom Actions are weighed.”

The Virtues and Excellencies of Men remote in History , from whom we can receive no personal Advantage , excite in us an Esteem for them , whether we will or no. Indeed , To confine real Affections to the Objects of Sense , and treat all others as Imaginary , must proceed from the most stupid Inconsideration. (4)

(4) It will , perhaps , be said , that an unknown and invisible Being is not qualified to raise Affection in the Human Heart. Wrapt up in the mysterious Obscurity of his Nature , he eludes our Search , & affords no determinate Object to our Love or Desire. “ We go forward , but he is not there ; and backward , but we cannot perceive him ; on the Left-Hand , where he doth work , but we cannot behold him : he hideth himself on the Right-Hand , that we cannot see him.” But ,

Notwithstanding this Obscurity , Is there any thing in the Universe more real and certain , than the Creator of the World and the Supporter of all Existence ? Is He , “ In whom we live and move ; ” too distant from us to excite Affection ? His Form and Essence , indeed , we cannot see ; but , to be unseen , and imperfectly known , in many other Instances , precludes neither Gratitude nor Love. It is not the Sight , so much as the strong Conception , or deep Impression of an Object , which affects the Passions. We glow with Admiration of Personages , who have lived in distant Ages : — Whole Nations have been transported with Zeal and Affection , for a generous Hero , or publick Deliverer , whom they knew only by Fame. Indeed , properly speaking , The direct Object of our Love , is , in every Case , invisible. For , That to which Affection is placed , is the Mind and Soul , the internal Character

We know, with the greatest Certainty, (because
 has mobility in body, and of spiritual form or we-
 racter of our Fellow-Creatures;) which, surely, is no less concealed,
 than the Divine Nature itself is, from the View of Men.

Whence ariseth the Relish of Beauty in our own Species? Do we
 love it merely as it is, a certain Mixture of Proportion and Colour? No; for, tho' these are to be taken into the Account as two material
 Ingredients; yet something else is wanting to beget our Love; some-
 thing that animates the Feature, & bespeaks the Mind within. Other-
 wise, we might fall in Love with a mere Picture, or any lifeless Mass
 of Matter, that was entertaining to the Eye. We might be as soon
 smitten with a dead uninformed, unmeaning Countenance, where
 there was an exact Symmetry and Regularity of Features; as with those
 Faces, which are enlivened by a certain Chearfulness, enabled by a
 certain Majesty, or endeared by a certain Complacency, diffused over
 their whole Mein. Is not this, therefore, the chief Foundation of our
 Taste for Beauty, that it gives us, (as we think,) some outward Signs
 of noble, benevolent, and valuable Qualities of the Mind? Thus
 a Sweetness of Mein and Aspect charms the more, because we look
 upon it as an Indication of a much sweeter Temper within: It is the
 habitual Disposition of the Soul appearing through, and impressed up-
 on the Features. The Face is often, tho' not always, the Index of the
 Mind, and those Ideas, to which the Soul is most habituated, leave be-
 hind them certain Traces and Impressions on the Countenance.

Now, If this be the chief, (we do not say, the only,) Source of our
 Taste for Beauty, that it exhibits to us some Signatures of inward Be-
 nevolence, Generosity and Worth, which, after all, are very uncertain
 and only presumptive Evidences of the internal Temper; Why have
 we not the most affectionate Love for that Being, the Traces of whose
 Benevolence, Bounty & Greatness, are imprinted upon the Universe,
 in bright, legible and undeniable Characters? — Convinced that He
 exists; beholding his Goodness spread abroad in his Works, exerted
 in the Government of the World; displayed, in some Measure, to
 men, in the Actions of his Son Jesus Christ; are we not furnished
 with

we are intimately conscious of it,) that Something exists, which cannot be perceived by any corporeal Organ, which is the Object of our most intense Love: We know that we have distinct Ideas of Reason, Wisdom, Order, Goodness and Justice, as of any sensible Qualities; and that they as really affect our Minds, tho in a different Manner: & that these Kinds of Ideas are the principal Subjects of our Speculation, so our principal Happiness depends upon them; indeed, without them, Humanity would be degraded to a Level with the brutal Nature, & its Enjoyments confined within a very narrow Circle.

It is, therefore, not only reasonable, but also natural, to be affected with a Presence, though it be not the Object of our Senses: whether it be, or be not, is merely an accidental Circumstance, which needs not come into Consideration: it is the Certainty that he is with us, and we with him, which hath the Influence. We consider Persons, then, as present, with every essential Requisite which the Heart demands, in Order to indulge the most warm, & at the same Time, the most rational Emotions? In a Word,

Tho the Deity cannot be seen, yet numerous Instances of his Goodness are visible throughout the Frame of Nature, and wherever they are seen, they naturally command our Love. Now, the greater and more sensible the Benefits are which we receive from him, the more lovely Ideas we shall entertain of him, and the more desirous shall we be to do his Pleasure and enjoy his Favour. Serm. XLVII.

present, not only when they are WITHIN the Reach of our Senses, but also when we are assured by any other Means that they are within such a Neareness; Indeed, if they are not, and we can only recall them to our Mind, and be moved towards them at the present: And, must He, who is so much more intimately with us, that "in him we live, and move, and have our Being," be thought too dittant to be the Object of our Affections?

Thus, Love, Reverence, Desire of Esteem, every Faculty and every Affection, tends towards, and is employed about it's respective Object in common Cases: & must the Exercise of them be suspended with Regard to him alone, who is an Object, an infinitely more than adequate Object, to our most exalted Faculties; Him, "of whom, & thro' whom, and to whom, are all things?" - the inexhaustible Fountain of all Perfections; of Perfections without Number, and without Limit; the Center, in which All Excellencies unite, in which All Glory resides, and from which every good thing proceeds? Such a Being cannot but be the Supreme Object of Love, to a reasonable & intelligent Mind. — Even supposing we ourselves received no Benefit from it, yet infinite Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom in Conjunction, are lovely in the very Idea, and amiable even

ever in the abstrat Imagination. But, That which makes those Perfections most truly & substantially, most really & permanently, the Object of our Love, is, the Application of them to ourselves, and our own more immediate Concerns ; by the Consideration of their being joined also with those relative, and moral Excellencies, which make them at the same Time no less beneficial to Us, than they are excellent absolutely in their own Nature. Then is, God the complete Object of Love. When, together with the Notions of infinite Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom, we consider Man moreover as equally governing the World, and when, in the Exercise of that Dominion over us, we consider his Truth and Faithfulness, his Justice and Impartiality, his Equity, Mercy, and Goodness towards his Creatures ; When we consider his Goodness in giving us Being, and our Being so excellent ; his Care, in making such plentiful Provision, for our temporal Preservation, and for our eternal Happiness ; his Mercy, in sending his Son to redeem us from Death, and to procure Pardon even for the greatest of Sinners upon their true Repentance. When we consider these things, There it is, that God truly appears the complete Object of Love : For so our Saviour himself teaches us so affirme: " To whom much is forgiven, he will love

On Love to God. 101

love, the more;" and the Apostle says, John viii. "We love him, because he first loved us." Now, as we have seen, the two last Opinions, distinguishing the other two, are, 1. That the Love to God may be divided into three Parts, viz. Grateful Regards to the Deity, founded upon Sense of his Goodness, and expressing itself in a sincere Desire to do whatever is agreeable to him; and 2. That the Goods of the Mind we take to be his Friends, which consider that Goodness is every where spread upon the Creation, and appears in the Work of Redemption in distinct, and bright Characters; it considers, further, that Goodness, a lovely Form, is the proper Object of Love and Esteem; and Goodness to us, the proper Object of Gratitude. But, in Goodness itself, in the Object of Love and Esteem, without some good Being, who is the Subject of it, it goes on in Full-Sight, that Love, Esteem, and Gratitude, are a Tribute due to that Being, to whom an infinite Pilem of Goodness does twelf, and from whom Emanations of Goodness are ever flowing.

The Mind rest here; but goes on further to reflect, that a cold, speculative Buffet, and a barren, inactive Gratitude, is really no sincere Esteem or Gratitude at all; which will ever manifest itself in strong Endeavours to have the Delight to please, and a Desire to be made happy by the Being beloved.

If we attend to what is here advanced, the Dispute whether the Love of God be disinterested or no, may be the more easily adjusted: and all the Confusion upon this Head has arisen from considering the Love of God under a partial and imperfect View, from considering it merely as a philosophical Esteem for him, without taking into the Account, what this Love exactly implies, [viz.] a sincere and perfect Desire to recommend ourselves to his favour; Application, and Blessing of those among whom we esteem. If the Love of God be considered merely as Sacred Esteem for him, it is, in a great Measure, disinterested. Personal Interest may, indeed, teach us to speak a Language foreign to our Heart: but we cannot really esteem any Person, till we find him worthy

LIV. 102

Doctrine of, explained.

23

This is the true Ground and Foundation of our Love towards God. — But, wherein this Love, towards God consists, and by what Acts it is most properly exercised, have sometimes been very much misunderstood.

Men

worthy of our Esteem; and then, it is that I thought, not Interest, which is productive of our Esteem. It is then the natural Result of a serious Consideration, that he is a Being, in whom there resides a full Assemblage of each lovely and endearing Quality, without the least jarring Mixture of any thing harsh, cruel, or tyrannical in his Nature; that he wills the Happiness of each Individual in the Creation, as far as it is consistent with his particular Rank and Station in the Scale of Beings, and the Good of the Universe in general.

When a Man has indeed himself to such a just and right Way of thinking upon the Deity, he cannot help loving, (in the Sense of Esteem,) what appears, upon repeated Views, so lovely to his Understanding. He cannot help loving him, whom he believes to be, what St. John has represented him, Love itself, unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Caprice, Malice, or Ill-Nature. For,

To whatever Cause such a Connection of Ideas was originally owing; yet, in Fact, the Ideas of Goodness & Esteem are in most Minds inseparably connected. The Union seems almost necessary. If it were an early Association, it is such an Association, as cannot easily, if at all be broken. But,

If the Love of God be considered not only as a mere Esteem for him, but what it undoubtedly is, an hearty and effectual Desire to recommend ourselves to his Love, Favour and Approbation; the Love of God, so far at least, is interested: And, though we may esteem him for what he is in himself, yet we desire to approve ourselves to him, in Expectation of what he will do for us. For,

What rational End or Motive could there be to please a Being, who would neither know his Pleasure by rewarding the obedient, or

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express

Men of strong Passions and warm Imaginations, have been too-apt to place it in a mere enthusiastick Zeal to express his Displeasure by punishing the wicked ?

They who make the Love of God disinterested, drop the most material and essential Part of it; that very Part which chiefly makes it a practical Principle, operating upon our Hearts, and productive of Benefits in our Lives and Conversations; and give us a very defective & imperfect Account of it. For, Love is not a cold sedentary Esteem, but an active Principle, which prompts us to secure an Interest, and cultivate a Friendship, with the Being beloved; & to feel a delightful Self-Complacency, when we please, or imagine we please him. It is a Compound of an Esteem for him, arising from an Apprehension of His Excellencies, & a Desire to be made happy by him here & hereafter. Had we no Desire of this from him, we should not serve him; and, had we no Esteem for him, did we not entertain the loveliest Impressions of him, we should not serve him with Pleasure. Dry and abstracted Reasons of Love to God operate very faintly, except we take into the Account the affecting Considerations of his being our Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Benefactor. His internal and essential Excellency may command our Admiration, excite in us Aftonishment, and convince the Understanding that we ought to reverence him; but his relative Dignity, his making, supporting, & redeeming us, touch the inmost Springs of the Mind, call forth each liberal Movement of the Soul, & powerfully work upon our Wills and Affections, the active Principles of our Composition. From a Love to God, to a Love of Enjoyment, a Desire of being made happy by him, the Transition is quick & easy; for, the more lovely Ideas we entertain of any Being, the more desirous shall we be to do his Pleasure, and procure his Favour.

Love, being, of all others, a Principle most active, will not, by any Means, lie dormant in the Heart, or remain inoperative in the Breast; like the Sun, it will manifest it's Warmth by it's Effects, and by it's regular and unvaried Production of every desirable and excellent Fruit.

Zeal of Affection, a Sort of SCHOLASTICK Speculation, unintelligible & fruitless ; seated in the Fancy only, instead of the Understanding ; and having no Effect upon the Will and Actions, in the general Course of a Man's Life. By which Means, they make the Love of God, a thing entirely distinct from the Love of Virtue and Righteousness : Whereas, the Scripture always speaks of them as being one and the same ; judging of Men constantly by that never-failing Rule, of discerning the Tree by it's Fruits ; and always representing Men to have just so much Love towards God in their Hearts, as they pay Obedience to his Laws in their Actions. It always signifies a moral Virtue, not a Passion or Affection ; and is, therefore, in Scripture always with great Care explained & declared to mean, the Obedience of a virtuous Life, in Opposition to the Enthusiasm of a vain Imagination. — In the Old Testament ; Moses, in his last Exhortation to the Israelites, thus expresses it ; "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to love him ?" — And, what it is to love Him ; he explains in the very next Words, By walking in all his Ways, and by serving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, keeping the Commandments of the Lord, & his Statutes. **Worm. XLVII.**

tutes

utes which he hath commanded us for our Good." In the New Testament, our Saviour still more distinctly expresses the same thing, inculcating and repeating it in such a Manner, as shows plainly his fore-seeing at that Time, in his own Mind, how apt Men would be to misunderstand it: "If ye love me, (saith he,) keep my Commandments;" — "He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me." — And, in his Prophecy concerning the Signs of the End of the World; he puts Love towards God, as the opposite to Iniquity; thereby plainly declaring it, to mean the same as Virtue: "Because iniquity shall abound, the Love, of many shall wax cold." — And the beloved Disciple, as he leaned more nearly upon his Master's Breast, so he seems in this Matter to have been more particularly inspired with his Master's Sentiments; "Whoso, (saith he,) keepeth his Word, in him, verily is the Love of God perfected;" — "Hereby know we, that we are in him: For, this is the Love of God that we keep his Commandments." "This, (saith he,) is Love, that we walk after his Commandments." And,

Effectually to prevent such Men's enthusiastick Notions of Religion, (as judge of their Love towards God by any empty Speculations, or by any

Warmth

W^thout Zeal in Matters of Opinion, or by any Passion or Affection whatsoever, with which the Mind or Imagination may, without any real Eruct of Virtue and Righteousness, fancy itself transported;) the same Apostle frequently gives us this one Sure Rule, in which there can be no Desception; that we measure the Truth of our Love towards God, by the Extent and Proportion of our Love towards our Neighbour: "Whoso seeth his Brother hath Need, & shutteth up his Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?" Again, "No Man hath seen God at any Time; If we love one another, God dwelleth in Us, and his Love is perfected in us: If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" The Argument is: God, who is invisible, can no otherwise be shown to be the Object of our Love, than by our delighting so obey and imitate him, in Acts of Righteousness and Charity and universal Good-Will towards Mankind, who are visible & always with us. "This Commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also;" Whosoever pretends to love God, should prove the Truth of what he professes, by his Behaviour towards Men.

But further, As the Scripture thus expressly, so the Reason and Nature of the thing itself no less plainly, shows; (in Opposition to all superstitious Notions;) that Love towards God, and Virtue or Righteousness of Life, are, in Reality, only two different Names for One and the Same Thing. For, What is rational Love, but a Desire to please the Person beloved, and a Complacency or Satisfaction in pleasing him? — To love God, therefore, is to have a sincere Desire of obeying his Laws, and a Delight or Pleasure in the Conscience of That Obedience. Wherever This Obedience is not found; Men may talk what they please, of ardent Love and Devotion towards God, the highest Zeal and even Fury for his Service; It is all nothing but most certain Hypocrisy. For, whatever specious Pretences the Wit of Man may invent, our Saviour's Argument will forever stand-good; "Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, nor Pigs of Thistles," The Tree will alway be known by it's Fruit. Love towards God, will always show-forth itself in doing his Will. "If a Man love me, (saith our Saviour,) he will keep my Words," To love God, is to love Goodness, Righteousness, Charity and Truth: If, therefore, to love these Virtues, and live at the same Time in the Practice of all the contrary Vices, be

a Contradiction; for the same Reason it follows, that, to pretend to love God, and at the same Time practise the Vices which he hates, is a Contradiction also. As "He only who doth Righteousness, is righteous;" so He only who doth what is pleasing to God, can be said to love him. — To pretend to love God, & yet delight to disobey him, is a manifest Inconsistency: And, therefore, the Psalmist's Admonition, is both an Argument of Reason, and a Rule by which to try Men; [viz] "Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the Thing which is Evil." In Scripture, wicked Men and evil Spirits, are elegantly stiled Enemies and Haters of God; not that they oppose or withstand his Power; for That is impossible; but because they hate his Laws, and delight in what he forbids: In like Manner, therefore, on the other Side, Love towards God, is also impossible to be expressed by any Benefit we can do to Him, but can be testified only by our Love of Righteousness & by our Practise of Virtue. Even to an Earthly Superior, to a Parent or a Prince, Love can no otherwise be shown from a Child or a Servant; than by chearfully observing the Laws, and promoting the true Interest, of the Government he is under. There is this Difference only, that Earthly-Superiors are then only to be obeyed

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obeyed, when they command what we see to be just and right: (A) But God, who, being infallible, can never command what is wrong, is for that Reason absolutely to be obeyed in all things: Only, to prevent the Errors and the Frauds of Men, whether impious or pious, great Heed is to be taken, in Matters of Weight and Importance, that whatever is pretended to be a Command of God, be really and indeed Such.

From this Account, thus given, of the true Nature of Love towards God; it will be easy for us to correct the Errors, which Men have sometimes fallen-into in BOTH Extremes.

Some have been very confident of their Love towards God, from a mere Warmth of superstitious Zeal and enthusiastick Affection, without any great Care to bring-forth in their Lives the Fruits of Righteousnes and true Holines: And the Error of these Men may be corrected, by considering, that God being essentially holy, just & good, & the Possessor of all other moral Perfections; 'tis consequently evident, that unless they consider him under THESE Characters which are inseparable from his Nature, and unless they accordingly love, (and themselves imitate,) these Virtues; it is not God whom

(A) See Note (A) Vol. iii. page 214, &c.

whom they are zealous for, but a mere abstract Notion, a Phantom only of their own Imagination.

On the contrary, Others there are, who, though they really love, & fear, & serve God, in the Course of a virtuous and religious Life; yet, because they feel not in themselves that Warmth of Affection, which many Enthusiasts pretend to; therefore, they are afraid and suspect, that they do not love God sincerely, as they ought. Now,

The Error of these pious Persons is to be corrected, by considering, that there is no other Mark so infallible of the Goodness of a Tree, as the Fruit which it brings-forth. If they live in Obedience to the Commands of God, they need no other Evidence of the Sincerity of their Hearts towards him: for, all other Signs may possibly be erroneous; but This, is the very thing signified itself. — Love of Goodness, Righteousness & Truth; is Love of God: for, "God is Goodness, Righteousness and Truth;" And he who loves these Virtues, (which are the moral Perfections of the divine Nature,) does therefore love God most perfectly; because he loves those Excellencies, for the Sake of which, God expects that we should love him above all things.

But further, There are some Persons of this Sort, who are fearful that their Love towards God is not

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entire

ent re and perfect , and that they do not love God as the CHIEF Good , if they obey and serve him for the Hope of Reward . But This also is a great Mistake : For, as Happiness , no less than Holiness , is essential to the Divine-Nature ; so, in all inferior Beings , the proper Reward of Virtue is inseparably desirable with Virtue itself : And , not the Desire of Heaven , which is the Perfection of Virtue ; but only the Desire of sinful Pleasure , (which is destructive of Virtue,) that is inconsistent with , and diminishes from , our Love to God .

The Scripture expressly declares , that " he that cometh to God , " not only may , but must " believe him to be the REWARDER of them that diligently seek him :" That Abraham accordingly , (the great Father of the Faithful ,) " looked for a City , which hath Foundations , whose Builder & Maker is God :" That " Moses had Respect unto the Recompence of Reward :" That the Martyrs suffered " that they might obtain a better Resurrection , " That " our Lord himself endured the Cross , for the Joy that was set before him :" And , that the End of good Men's Faith , is " the Salvation of their Souls , " even " Joy unspeakable and full of Glory ." The Hope of which Joy , the Apostle not only supposeth to be consistent with , but speaks of it as being , itself , our " Loyer of Christ ." Having

- Having thus shown the Foundation of our Love
to God, proceed,

II. To state the Degree, and point-out the Measure, of our Love to him. — In Order to which, it will be necessary to fix the Sense of the Words before us, with some Accuracy; because from them, such a Degree of Love to God has been pleaded for, as is inconsistent with any subordinate Desire of inferior things.

The Meaning, therefore, of these Words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, & with thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength," is, that we serve God with all those Faculties which he hath given us: not that this Love is to be exclusive of all other Desires, but of all other rival Affections; that whenever the Love of God and that of the World come in Competition, the former undoubtedly ought to take-place of the latter: according to that of our Saviour, "He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me;" and again, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God;" which supposeth, that other things may be sought-after in their proper Rank & Order, without an undue Preference! We are not to desire any thing but him, (i.e.) as the Psalmist expresseth it, "in Comparison with him."

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Visionary

Visionary Writers, who have sequestered themselves from the World, may attempt to prove, that all our Love ought to centre in the Deity exclusively: but, such romantick Notions are unintelligible in Theory, and in Fact impracticable. They convince us of nothing but this; that those whose Understandings are over-refined and subtle, are guilty of as great Errors, as those whose Understandings are waxed gross; & that it is hard to tell, whether Men mistake oftener by not exerting their Abilities, or by stretching them beyond their proper Line, and determinate Sphere. If the One grovel on the Ground, the Other are continually soaring aloft, beyond the View of common Sense. Instead of seeing all things in the Deity, as some have fancied, we discern plain Proofs of the Deity in all things: there being nothing in Nature, of which we can give a plausible Account, without calling-in the Deity to our Aid. We have no direct and immediate View of him, as he is in himself; "we see him thro a Glass," thro the Mirror of the Creation. And if there were nothing lovely, and consequently the Object of our Love in the Creature, we could have no Grounds to love the Creator. The Love of the Creator, therefore, implies the Love of the Creation. Not being able to see him "Face to Face," we love him

him in his Works, the Representatives, the fairest
Representatives, of his original Loveliness. Ac-
cordingly St. John says, "If any Man love not his
Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God,
whom he hath not seen?" (i.e.) the visible Creation,
and Man, the Master-piece in it, being the only
Mediums thro which we discern the Loveliness of
God, represented and reflected to us, if we have a
splenetic Hatred and Disrelish for them, how can we
entertain any Love for the Maker of them, of whom
we know nothing, but by, and thro them? They
are Steps and Scales by which we must ascend, in
the last Resort, to the Love of him, from whom they
derive, and to whom we must ascribe, whatever is
good in them.

To love God, therefore, with all our Heart, is so
far from excluding all inferior Complacencies, that
it necessarily comprehends him. — Our Love must
begin with the Creature, and end with Him: We
must love, as well as argue, upwards, from the Ef-
fect to the Cause; & because there are several things
desirable, even here, under proper Regulations,
conclude that He, the Maker of them, ought to be
the Supreme, not the only Object of our Desires.

We cannot love God in himself, without loving
him in, and for his Works.

What the Scriptures require, is easy to be under-

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stood

stood, and not impossible to be practised, [viz] That our Gratitude to God, and our Love of him, ought to have the Ascendant, & to be the governing Principle; and that all other Regards ought to be subordinate to it. The main Design of Christianity is, that we should look upon worldly Things with the Indifference of a Traveller, whose chief Views are fixed upon his Journey's End, and upon his abiding Country.

The Words before us may be more minutely explained, thus, as making the Performance of this Duty acceptable and complete: "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, & with all thy Mind." In St. Luke it is, somewhat more distinctly; "With all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind."

Which Words, tho sometimes, indeed, used promiscuously, yet, when thus put-together in Order, seem intended to express, after a more distinct Manner, the requisite Circumstances of that Obedience, which is the proper Evidence of our Love towards God. As,

First, It must be SINCERE: We must "love or obey him with all our Heart."

'Tis not the external Action only, but the inward Affection of the Mind principally, that God regards:

An Affection of Mind, which influences all a Man's Actions in Secret, as well as in Publick; which determines his Person's true Character, or Denomination; and distinguishes him who is really a Servant of God, from him who only seems or appears to be so. — It was the Character of the Jews of Old, as it is, too often, that of Christians; Thus People draweth nigh unto me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me; (i.e.) they are not affectionate and sincere in the Service they pay me.

As some have strained this Duty too high, others have sunk it much too low, and made the Love of God, and the Keeping of his Commandments, to be the same thing: Whereas, — To love God, is, not merely to do what he commands, but to do it because he commands it; God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, does not value any outward Obedience, where the Heart is not interested. But, (and you will be sorry at such a painful effort) Obedience is. Our Obedience must be UNIVERSAL: We must "love God with all our Soul," with an unrevered, and not with a partial Obedience. God is too sovereign, and too exalted by any desiring Vice. Not that he who truly loves God, must consequently wholly neglect, or have no regard at all to any thing else; but, the main business must, for ever, be our Affections.

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as to interfere with our Duty, when they come in Competition; and thereby render our Hearts, (as the Scripture expresses it,) "not right," or "not whole with the Lord." The Psalmist places his Confidence in This only, that "he had Respect unto ALL God's Commandments." (A) — Not that our Obedience in this Life can be indeed sinless; but that we must be sincere in endeavouring to avoid all Sin, according to the Measure and Possibilities of our present Frailty; till at last we be presented really "faultless, before the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy." But,

III. Our Obedience must be **CONSTANT & PERSISTENT** in Time, as well as **UNIVERSAL** in its Extent: We must "love God with all our Strength;" (i.e.) put-forth the active Powers of our Souls in loving and serving him: It is to rouse ourselves from that Supineness and listless Indolence, which is far more painful

(A) Generally speaking, most Men's Temptation lies principally in some One particular Instance; which is the proper Trial of our Obedience, and of our Love towards God. If we overcome in this Instance, "then may we have Confidence towards God;" but, if we fail here, & continue so to do, "we are guilty of all." By forsaking the "Sin that most easily besets us," we must endeavour to improve daily and grow in Grace; aiming at the Character given in the Gospel to Zecharias, that he was "perfect, walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless."

greatest than a continued Multiplicity of Business, without any Respite: It is to quicken the Springs of Action, which moved on heavily before: It is to do well without being weary of well-doing: It is to lay out our Endeavours, that we may have a competent Sense to discern, a sincere Inclination to embrace, and a steady Resolution to hold-fast, what is best & most pleasing to the Deity, persevering in our Duty, without fainting. — “ He that endureth unto the End, the same shall be saved.” — “ He that overcometh, shall inherit all things.” And, “ We are made Partakers of Christ, if we hold the Beginning of our Confidence steadfast unto the End.”

The Scripture Notion of Obedience, is, “ Walking in Holiness and Righteousness before God all the Days of our Life:” not to be never to fall into Sin, but so as never to apostatize from our Duty by falling finally into thy Course of Sin. “ The Just shall live by Faith; but if any Man draw back, God will have no Pleasure in him.” For, Christianity is a Warfare, Wherem we must not only fight, but so fight, as to overcome: And a Race, wherein we must not only run, but struggle, as to obtain. But,

IV. Our Obedience to God, ought to be willing and cheerful: We must love him with all our Mind. “ They that love my Name, shall be joyful in Serm. XLVII.

in thee?" And St. Paul, among the Fruits of the Spirit, reckons-up " Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost." Nevertheless, This ought not to be Matter of Scruple to any weak and sincere Mind : For, our Obedience to the Commands of God, whatever Principle it proceeds from , even tho' it be but Fear only, will be accepted unto Salvation. But, Virtue becomes more perfect , when 'tis made easy by Love, & by an habitual Practice incorporated, (as it were,) into our very Nature and Temper. For so the Scriptures represent Angels, as rejoicing and delighting to perform their Lord's Pleasure ; And our Saviour declares that it was " his Meat and Drink, to do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven." Which Examples when we can, in any tollerable Measure, imitate, then is fulfilled in us the Observation of St. John, that "perfect Love casteth out Fear," - And that of St. Paul, that "we have not received the Spirit of Bondage to fear, but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; God having not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Love, and of a sound Mind."

These are the Circumstances requisite to make the Performance of this Duty acceptable and complete : We must love the Lord our God, "with all our Heart," (i.e.) sincerely & affectionately : - "with

All our Soul," (i.e.) wish an unshaken and universal Obedience : - "with all our Strength," (i.e.) wish Courage, Constancy and Perseverance : - and lastly, "with all our Mind," (i.e.) willingly & cheerfully,

Upon the Whole ; The Love of God is a settled, well-grounded, rational, Delight in him, founded upon Conviction and Knowledge. It is seated in the Understanding, & therefore, not necessarily accompanied with any brisker Agitations of Spirit ; though, indeed, the Body may keep-pace with the Soul, and the Spirits flow in a more sprightly Torrent to the Heart, when we are affected by any advantageous Representation of God, or by a Reflection on his Blessings.

This was necessary to be observed, because weak Men of a sanguine Complexion are apt to be elated upon the Account of those short-lived Raptures and transient Gleams of Joy, which they feel within themselves ; and others of a phlegmatick Constitution to despond, because they cannot work themselves up to such a Degree of Ecstasy. Whereas,

Nothing is more precarious and uncertain, than that Affection which depends upon the Ferment of the Blood : it naturally ceaseth, as soon as the Spirits grow fatigued, & exhausted.

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Men

Men, of this Make, sometimes draw near to God with great Fervency, and at other Times are quite estranged from him, like those great Bodies which make very near Approaches to the Sun; and then all at once, fly-off to an unmeasurable Distance from the Source of Light.

We may meet a Person, at some happy Time, when his Heart over-flows with Joy and Complacency, who will make us warm Advances of Friendship, & give us Admittance to the inmost Recesses of his Soul, and prevent all Solicitation, by offering unasked, those Services, which we, in this soft and gentle Season of Address, might have been encouraged to ask: Wait but till his Flush of good Humour and Flow of Spirits are over, & we shall find all his Over-Warmth of Friendship settle into Coldness and Indifference; & himself as much differing from himself, as any one Person can from another: Whereas, a Person of a serious Frame and Composure of Mind, consistent with himself, & therefore constant to us, goes on, without any alternate Heats and Colds in Friendship, in an uninterrupted Tenor of serving and oblidging his Friend.

Which of these Two is most valuable in himself, & acceptable to us, the Answer is obvious. Just so,

A Vein of steady, regular, consistent Piety, is
more

more acceptable to that Being, " with whom there no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning," than all the passionate Sallies, and short intermitting Fits of an unequal Devotion.

To love God, then, truly, is not to have a few warm Notions about the Deity, fluttering awhile in the Breast, and afterwards leaving it void and empty of Goodness; But it is to have the Love of God dwelling in us. It is not a religious Mood or Humour, but a religious Temper. It is not to be now and then pleased with our Maker in the Gaiety of the Heart, when, (more properly speaking,) we are pleased with Ourselves. It is not to have a few occasional transient Acts of Complacency and Delight in the Lord rising in our Minds, when we are in a Vein of Good-Humour, as the Seed in the Parable which "soon sprung up, and as soon withered-away, because it had no Root, nor Deepness of Earth;" But, it is to have a lasting, habitual, and determinate Resolution to please the Deity, rooted and grounded in our Hearts, and influencing our Actions THROUGHOUT.

A Sermon Preached

on Valentine's Day
SERMON XLVIII.

First, on the Duty of Devotion.
On the same Subject.

Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind."

As God is the most excellent of all Beings, absolutely perfect in Knowledge, Wisdom, Rectitude, and Goodness; so, therefore, he justly challengeth our highest Esteem and most affectionate Regard, indeed, they will naturally go of their own Accord, terminate upon him, if we have a firm Persuasion of his Being and Attributes, and carefully attend to them. These are what I aim now, yea-here, to produce, in Recommendation of the Duty and Subject before us. And,

First, The Mind of Man cannot but distinguish in things which are presented to it, between Beauty and Deformity, Regularity and Confusion, being pleased with the One, and displeased with the Other. A careful Attention improves this Sense, and

and makes the Difference more discernible and more affecting; *beautia* has a Foundation in Nature. *It is* Scarcely any one is so ignorant, and so unaccustom'd to observe the Diversity of Forms, as not to see a superior Excellence in some above others, consisting in Order, Proportion and Harmony; and to Men of more enlarged Understanding, and a more exquisite Taste, the Love of such Beauty rises to a greater Height, and gives a Pleasure far exceeding all sensual Gratifications. Now, whence does this proceed? And to what Cause shall it be attributed? Surely it proceeds from our Frame, and we are so constituted by Nature; but yet if we observe how such Beauty strikes our Minds, we shall perceive in it a Reference to an Original, a designing Intelligence, which produced it, and which is apprehended to be more excellent.

When a Man views attentively any curious Production of human Art, it occurs immediately to his Thoughts, that this is not the Effect of Chance, which cannot be the Cause of Order; nor give any Pleasure to the Mind; but that it is the Result of Contrivance: and it is his discerning the Characters of Understanding in the exact Adjustment of the several Parts, with their various Relations, and the Harmony of the Whole, that gives him the agreeable

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able Entertainment. Without this, if there be any Affection excited, it is but low, of a quite different Kind from that which we are considering, and still in Proportion as the Marks of Wisdom are discovered in any Work, so is our Sense of its Beauty and the Pleasure of contemplating it. The Materials are capable of any Form, the most disagreeable as well as the most pleasing, & they are never apprehended to have formed themselves, it is the disposing Intelligence which attracts the Affection, and gives Delight.

If from the low Efforts of human Skill & Genius we take our Rise to the Works of Nature, we shall see vastly more exquisite Beauty, a more exact Proportion, and perfect Uniformity, amidst an infinitely greater Variety of Parts. Take any Piece of inanimate Nature, diversified as we see it, the visible Heavens, the wide Seas, huge Tracts of Mountains, large Forests, or any other which fill the Sight; — These strike the contemplative Mind with a delightful Sensation, abstracting from all Regard to the Usefulness of them: But, if we examine the Sensations narrowly, it will appear to arise from the discerned Regularity of the Object, (i.e) the Manifestation of wise Design in framing it. Add to these Works one to another, considering at the same

Time

Notice their mutual Relations, (the everlasting Hills
solid'd upon their immovable Foundations;) the tall
Trees waving their slender Tops in the fluid Air,
and sheltering a Multitude of feeble Inhabitants,
yea safe; The Vallies overspread with Herbage &
Corn, for the Subsistence of Man and Beast; The
vast Ocean circumscribed by Limits, which it's
Waves in their Fury cannot pass over; The celest
Orbs preserving their original Distances from,
and shedding upon Earth their benign Influences;) In
this View the Idea of Order grows upon us, [viz.]
of grand Design, which is the just & natural Object
of affectionate Admiration. But,

This is only an imperfect Sketch of that stupen-
dous Fabrick, the Universe, in every Part of which,
that falls under our Observation, the same Regula-
rity appears, and a perfect Harmony in the Whole.

If we descend to a particular Survey of Nature's
Works, the Variety is surprising; the curious Frame
of every Individual is astonishing; and the conveni-
ent Disposal of them all, is amazing. What a num-
berless Multitude of living Forms do we behold on
this Earth itself, the very lowest of them inimicable
by Art, the Structure of each so nice that no human
Understanding can discern, nor penetrate into the
secret Springs of its Movements, and all so proper-
ed T. Sec. XLVII. will bring me to Drury

ly placed as to have the best Means of Preservation, and a full Opportunity of exerting their vital Powers?

If we carry our Inquiries into the Extent of created Existence, beyond the Reach of Sense, the modern Improvements which have been made in speculative Knowledge, will lead our Reason to apprehend Worlds above Worlds, the Limits of which we cannot so much as conjecture, & where the like Order prevails as in our Globe. So that the Effect surpasses our Imagination, much more the Cause.

Yet still, the Affection is a real natural Affection, and the Object is a really existing Object, though incomprehensible. For, let any Man deny if he can, that his Mind loves and is pleased with Order, as the Effect of wise Design; and the more exact the Order is, and the more comprehensive the Design, the greater Pleasure it yields, & the higher Esteem it raiseth of the Author. Nor is it here endeavoured to prove, but only supposed as what we are fully convinced of, that there is one supreme, eternal, all comprehending Mind, the Fountain of Being, and Parent of the Universe, who stretched out the Heavens by his Wisdom, and established the Earth by his Discretion, the original Source of all Beauty, Harmony, and Wisdom, & therefore the adequate Object of our highest Esteem and Affection. The

any the intelligent and moral World contains a yet more wonderful and glorious Display of the divine Wisdom, than the corporeal System and the animal Kingdom. A Multitude of derived and dependent Beings, endowed with Understanding and self-determining Powers, the Image of the Author's self-evident spiritual Nature & Attributes, each a distinct conscious Self, possessed of a Dignity and Perfection which we cannot help thinking superior to the whole of Inanimate Nature, all disposed of in the best Manner, the most suitable to their Capacities, and united in one Society by the common Bond of Benevolence, every Individual directed by the Inflexibility of it's Nature, so far as voluntary Agents in such Circumstances could be so directed, to promote the common Good, — How glorious is this great Family in Heaven and Earth, under a wise & benevolent Economy, all cared-for by the Providence of it's Father! How amiable is he! We do not speak of moral Qualities, and Dispositions in them, (a faint Resemblance of his perfect moral Character, which is the Object of another Affection,) but considering the whole System of rational Creatures placed in such Order as they are, and under an Administration suitable to their Nature, it appears to be an amazing Production of Power, and a wonderful Serm. XLVIII.

ful Manifestation of Wisdom; which Perfections concurring in one Agent are the Objects of our Esteem and Reverence in the Degree in which they are discerned. And, as it is in contemplating this Fabrick of the material World, our Idea of the Creator's Understanding and Greatness, & our Admiration rises in Proportion to our Knowledge of his Works; the more accurately we examine its Parts, and the farther we enlarge our Considerations of its unmeasurable Magnitude, the more curious & magnificent it appears; So it is here. Nam sed etiam — If we study the Constitution of a single intelligent Creature; it's various Powers and Affections as they are related to each other, and all harmoniously conspiring to answer the Ends of its Being, it is an astonishing Contrivance. And, if we consider the Diversity of Degrees in mental Accomplishments, which appear among the Individuals of our own Species, all under the Direction of the Father of Lights; and the vastly more enlarged Capacities with which superior Orders, (we know not how many of them, nor with what Distinctions,) are endowed, all of them in different Ways fulfilling the Law of their Creation, and having different Enjoyments suitable to their several Capacities; — Who can think of the great Author without Admiration, but

LIVX. forbear

soeas, distinguishing with the most affluence, Ex-
tem? Again,

If so, these general Considerations on the Works
of God add a particular Reflection on each of
them, above so marvellous - their Numbers incom-
prehensible - their Extent prodigious, in their Or-
gan so exquisite - All derived from one Mind of
single Agency. How wonderful is he! - All the
Beauties, shared among the innumerable Beings in
Heaven and Earth, and the Harmony of the whole
are the Effects of his Skill and Contrivance; and all
the scattered Rays of Understanding which in differ-
ent Degrees are to be found in the several Orders
of intelligent Creatures, are Expressions from this
one pure eternal Source of intellectual Light.

Can the human Heart be Indifferent to such a
Being? No surely: The attentive unprejudiced
Mind will find a Respect to him arise in it, which is
unparalleled in the whole Compass of its Affections,
as the Dignity & Excellence of the Object is with-
out any Parallel. The Objects which are limited,
and which it can thoroughly comprehend, are not
adequate to its aspiring Desires, it still seeks some-
thing beyond them; but it loses itself delightfully
in the Contemplation of infinite incomprehensible
Excellence, (in the present Case infinite Wisdom,)
which

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which necessarily attracts the highest Veneration, & ad intelligent Nature. But,

Secondly, Another eminent Perfection of the Deity is Goodness, which naturally appears to our Minds amiable, and is the Object of Love in the strictest Sense. Indeed, without this, God himself could not be the complete Object of our highest Desires and most perfect Enjoyment. For, A singular However venerable Wisdom may appear, and the Contemplation of it entertaining, it is not the only, or chief Good of Man: We have other Affections which must have their suitable Objects, and they appear in a different Light from that of mere Speculation, to make the Mind happy.

Of Goodness we have a very distinct idea; every Man understands by it a Disposition to communicate Happiness. We are conscious of some Degree of it in ourselves, & we are acquainted of it in others by its genuine Fruits, by wherever it appears. As whenever the Mind reflects upon it, it appears lovely, the Object not only of Approbation as some other Qualities are, but of a strong Affection.

Let any Man set against each other in his own Mind these opposite Characters, One benevolent & kind, ready to do good as far as it is in his Power, & uniformly acting from that Principle; The Other

malicious

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Indolent, endeavouring the Destruction & Misery of all within his Reach, or even perfectly selfish, intent wholly on the Pursuit of private Enjoyment, without the least Regard to the Happiness of other Beings, indeed, distressing them in the greatest Degree, and in their highest Interest, if they stand in the Way of his own Satisfaction in any Respect; & let him try if he can preserve a perfect Indifference of Heart towards these Characters, without preferring the former to the latter. The Truth is, they must be Creatures otherwise made than we are, to whom disinterested Goodness is not an Object of Love, and who find no Pleasure in the Contemplation of it.

We shall not insist here on the Evidences of God's Goodness; they are the same with the Evidences of his Being. His Works have the Character of Benevolence as well as of Power and Wisdom; and a benevolent Principle, as truly as eternal Power and God-head, is an invisible Excellence of his Nature, which "from the Creation of the World is clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made."

What an amazing Variety of Enjoyments belongs to the sensitive & the rational Life, all derived from divine Bounty? How wonderfully is inanimate

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Nature

Nature accommodated to the Uses of living things? And, as the supreme Being, the Creator of the World, has filled it with the Fruits of his Liberty, that which riseth our Idea of this Principle in him as an Object of Affection, is, the Freeness and Disinterestedness of it.

Every inferior Agent depending upon another for the Preservation of his Being and for his Happiness, must be supposed to need something from without, and to have particular Desires which ultimately terminate in himself. But how can we conceive of any other Spring of Action than Benevolence in the absolutely self-sufficient and independent Being?

"There is, therefore, none good but one, that is God," none essentially & immutably good, none besides him who always acts solely from that Principle. Here is Goodness in Perfection, which must appear amiable to every Mind that bears any resemblance of it, and be the Subject of delightful Meditation.

If these are our Apprehensions concerning the Deity, we can hardly conceive what should stop the Course of our Love to him. It is true,

There are other Parts of his Character, (to be hereafter observed,) which, when compared with our own, may damp our Hopes from, and produce Fear

the commandments. But since it is perfect kind. Difficulties necessarily assist our Attention. the Ideas of Supreme Goodness, (obscuring from all other Considerations,) would tend to have an Object which must have irresistible Charms for the human Heart; & that we should not be able to consider without sensible Pleasure.

It may, therefore, justly be feared, that as some Men's habitual Impressions of God, (particularly in their Devotion,) have more of a joyless Awe, and servile Dread, than a delightful Comphacency; this proceeds from their insipid viewing him to themselves, as a Being whom all regards his Creatures in the Way of arbitrary Dominion, oppressing them to Happiness or Misery merely because he will so please.

Whereas, the true Notion of infinite Goodness I directed in it's Exercise by the most perfect Wisdom, and having always for it's Object the greatest and most extensive Happiness, would inspire the Mind with Sentiments of ingenuous Gratitude, and thereby be the best Security of our sincere Obedience. At the same Time, there is no Reason to allow that the Tendency of this is to encourage a presumptuous Confidence in Sinners, who imagining they may go on securely in their Trespasses, with Impunity (which can only proceed from the foolishness of men.)

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ed

ed Depravity of Heart, and a wrong Notion of the divine Goodness, as if it were a blind undistinguishing Proneness to the Communication of Happiness; for besides that every considerate Person must see that Supreme Goodness itself has established an inviolable Connection between Virtue and Felicity; in the true Sense of that glorious and admirable Perfection; even naturally and immediately begets an inward Shame and Remorse for having dishonoured it; and some Degree of Hope is absolutely necessary to Repentance. But, ~~judgibz & nati~~, ~~last~~ I will add - Let us consider ourselves as the particular Objects of the divine Favour; -- That whatever Good we possess of any Kind, -- whatever Excellence we are conscious of in the Frame of our Nature, and its Pre-eminence above other Creatures in the World about us, -- That Largeness of Understanding by which we are enterprised with an infinite Diversity of Objects, -- Those natural Affections which yield us a great Variety of Pleasure, -- Our natural Capacities and Improvements which are accompanied with a high Sense of Worth, -- The Privileges of our Condition, -- This Provision which is made for our easy Enjoyment of Life, whether by the Means of our own Invention and Industry, or the Assistance of our Fellow-Creatures, or without them all together.

and the greatest Happiness we hope for hereafter; — Thus, & all other good things, however conveyed, are originally owing to the Bounty of God. Now,

The Affection of Gratitude is so natural to the Mind of Man, that we shall scarcely allow him to be one of the Species who is altogether void of it; at least, to be ungrateful is universally allowed one of the most abandoned and profligate Characters. But surely this Principle ought to operate most efficaciously towards the greatest Beneficence; and there is none that may be compared with that which God has shown to us. — Shall we be much affected with the Kindness of our Fellow-Creatures, and disposed to make thankful Acknowledgments for their Favours? And shall we be insensible of that Goodness to which we owe our Being, and our very Capacity of Happiness, as well as the Materials of it? This is the noblest Object of human Affection, in which the Mind, firmly persuaded and steadily contemplating it, rests fully satisfied. And tho' the Exercise and Manifestation of this divine Principle towards us, gives us the most convincing Proof of it, and a very lively Sense of its amiable Excellence, yet does not the Affection ultimately terminate in our own Happiness, so that we should be justly said to love God for our own Sakes, but in Supreme Goodness

Goodness itself, which must appear the most complete and worthy Object of Love to every intelligent and moral Being whose Judgment is not misled by Prejudices or Inattention, and is not deeply corrupted in it's moral Affections. But,

Thirdly. We may consider the entire moral Character of the Deity. — All his moral Attributes are summed-up in Goodness, which is probably the justest Way we can conceive of them as active Principles in him.

Perhaps, in inferior Characters Benevolence may be rightly called the Sum of Virtue; but of the supreme Being we cannot think more becomingly than that this solely is the Spring of his Actions. Yet, considering the Variety of it's Exercise according to the different Condition of rational Creatures, & how variously Individuals are affected with those very Measures which they steadily pursue as their great End, (the universal Good,) hence arises a Diversity in our Conceptions concerning that most simple uniform Principle which is without Variableness or Shadow of Turning.

We know how to distinguish in imperfect human Characters, between the Righteous and the Good. The last is the finishing Quality, yet the others are necessary: And applying this to God, we have

Somewhat different Noisome, of his Goodness abstracted, solely considered, and of the Redeemer or Holiness of his Nature, this Justice and Truth; all which, in Conjunction with unchangeable Goodness, make up his true moral Character, and also the lesser Object of our Affection. Now to finish a Sloggin at last.

In ^{any} Man calmly consider how his Mind is affected towards those Qualities in a mixed Degree of Perfection. Let him try what a Difference his Heart naturally makes between the generous Patriot, the faithful Friend, the inflexibly righteous Judge, the kind Benefactor, and the directly opposite Characters. Whether the One does not necessarily exceed his Veneration and Esteem, and the Other beggar his Contempt and Aversion, tho' they are supposed to be at the remotest Distance from his personal Knowledge, and without a Possibility of having any Effect on his Interests. Let him place these two Objects in another Point of View, applying the Characters, so far as may be justly applied, with in his particular Acquaintance; & for the Condition of the World is not, at any Time, either so good or so bad, but that this Distinction is manifest; & will it will evidently appear that this Neighbor is more excellent than his Neighbor; & that a Gentleman's Integrity, with all the publick and private Virtues,

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command

command a peculiar Respect, shining thro' all the Obscurity which Superstition & a Party-Spirit have been able to throw upon them; and still as the moral Character rises in Perfection, our Esteem for it proportionably increases. But,

Let us suppose a Being of the most perfect Benevolence, Goodness, and all other moral Excellencies, in the nearest Situation, and most intimately related to ourselves; - That there is a constant Intercourse between him and us, - We have daily Opportunities of observing his Conduct, (the Manifestations of his amiable Attributes,) and our Behaviour, on the other Hand, is continually in his View, - That we have received innumerable Benefits, indeed, our all from his Bounty, and constantly depend upon him for every thing we need; - That he is our supreme immediate Governor, and that, our present & future State, with all the Changes in them, are absolutely under his Disposal; surely we cannot doubt but this Being is the proper Object of our highest Affection. And, If far inferior Degrees of moral Goodness in our Fellow-Creatures necessarily attract Veneration and Esteem, (even tho' beheld at a Distance, & our Interest is not concerned in the Effects of it,) such absolute Perfection placed in the strongest Point of Light, being exerted upon ourselves, must raise in

such a virtuous Mind a superlative Reverence and
Awe.

Let us observe the natural Workings of the hu-
man Heart towards such a perfect moral Character,
so manifested, and falling within our Knowledge,
by which we shall understand the genuine Opera-
tions of Love to God, and be able to discern them in
our own Minds. As,

First, It is accompanied with a Desire of Imitation.

Since we ourselves are indued with a moral Capa-
city, it seems to be utterly inconsistent, & what but
Human Nature is not capable of, that moral Excellence
should be an Object of affectionate Esteem, yet
without a Desire of resembling it.

Let any Man fix his Attention to the amiable Ideas
of Honesty, Justice, Mercy, and Fidelity, as exem-
plified in a particular Moral-Agent well-known to
him, and try whether he does not find secret earnest
Wishes in his Soul, that he was possessed with the
same Qualities? Indeed, this Principle seems to have
a great Influence on the Generality of Mankind,
whose Tempers and Behaviour are in a great Mea-
sure reformed by Example, never without Appearance
of some moral Species to recommend it; and it is
the great practical Principle of Religion. For,

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According

According to Men's Notions of the Deity, so are their Dispositions & their moral Conduct, of which the History of all Ages, and all Religions, afford us plain Instances. Just Sentiments concerning the supreme Being, as perfectly holy, righteous and good naturally tend to produce, and when seriously considered with hearty & pure Affection, actually have produced the like Tempers and Manners in Men, carrying human Virtue to it's greatest Height of Perfection; whereas, the erroneous Opinions of many concerning the Dispositions of their Go's, (still retaining an Idea of their Dominion,) have, most of all corrupted their Morals by the Desire of Imitation, and added the strongest Sanction to their Vices. Such is the Force & the natural Operation of Love to Moral-Agents, those especially who are supposed to be in a superior Condition, & above all, the acknowledged Object of religious Respect. And,

By this clear Evidence we may try the Sincerity of our professed Love to the true God; can any attentive Mind, that would not wilfully deceive itself, be at a Loss in judging by this plain Rule. But,

Secondly, Sincere Love to the Deity, considered as a Being of the most perfect moral Character, with whom we have to do in such a Variety of important Relations, and in whose Presence we are continually,

It is always accompanied with a sincere Desire of his Approbation, and when this is noised into our hearts, we shall find that it never is, nor can be separated from all affectionate Esteem; and that the Love of any Person naturally directs us to form our Conduct & to live Uiting, and make it our constant Study to please them. — So it is in inferior Instances; — Children make it their principal Endeavour to please their Parents, Servants their Masters, and Subjects their Sovereigns; and not only so, but they who live together upon Terms of the most perfect Equality, are determined by their social Affections, to render themselves agreeable to each other. It is thus that the Desire of Honour, and the Fear of Disgrace, (powerful Principles of Action in the human Nature,) are to be accounted for: Our mutual Affections strongly engage us to seek mutual Esteem; & while we love Mankind, it is impossible to be wholly indifferent whether we have their Approbation or not. But, as this Principle makes a Distinction among Men, (for a well-disposed Mind values the Approbation of others in Proportion to their Wisdom, and Virtue,) so it operates equally towards Beings of different Orders. Intelligent Agents of other Species are Objects of our Esteem as well as Mankind;

Mankind; and if we suppose ourselves under their Observation, it will naturally be our Desire to approve our Condu&t to them according to the Degree of their apprehended Wisdom and superior moral Excellence. Especially the sincere Love of that Being who is so intimately present with us as to know the Secrets of our Hearts, and who is unparalleled in all moral Perfections, our gracious Father, Guardian, and Governor, will determine us to make it the principle Aim of our Lives, and of all our deliberate Designs and Actions, that we may be approved of him.

If, therefore, God has made his Will known to us; If he has directed us after what Manner we shall act so as to please him, our Obedience is the natural Expression of our Love to him, and in vain shall we pretend to have that Affection in our Hearts, while we do not keep his Commandments. But, every Man has the Work of the divine Law written in his Heart. By a fair and unprejudiced Attention to the first Dictates of our own Mind upon every Question relating to his moral Conduct, (without entering into perplexing Debates, which generally take their Rise from some Degree of inward Dishonesty, and to Error rather than of the Truth,) he knows what will be acceptable to his great Ruler & Judge,

So far as to assure his Heart, and have Confidence towards him; which by the unalterable Appointments of Supreme Goodness is the genuine Result of Integrity in all good Affections; comprehended in loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, & with all our Soul, and with all our Mind, & with all our Strength.

The same practical Principle of Love to God, which is manifested by Obedience to his Precepts as its inseparable Effect, will also produce an absolute Submission to the Appointments of his Providence, with entire Confidence in him. For, if we have habitually upon our Minds an affectionate Sense of his Supreme Dominion, exercised with the most perfect Wisdom, and constantly and invariably pursuing, as its chief End, the greatest Good, what can follow more naturally than that we should be satisfied in all Events, & wholly resigned to his Will?

These two, a sincere uniform Disposition exerted in Practice to keep God's Commandments, and a cheerful unreeling Submission to his Providence, constitute that Temper of Mind in which true Plenty consists, and which is the perpetual Source of inward Serenity and Joy. So far as we deviate from them, and are conscious of rebellious Inclinations & of unsubmissive Discontent, misgiving Fears arise in

our Minds of his Disapprobation, because then it appears that we are not made perfect in Love, for Love made perfect by the fruits of Obedience and Resignation; only, "cast out Fear." It is natural The supreme Being, whose glorious Character justly claims our highest Affection and most devout Regards, is not, indeed, intuitively discerned by us; he is not the immediate Object either of our external or internal Senses. "Behold, (saith Job,) I go forward but he is not there," (visible) "and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the Left-Hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; He hideth himself on the Right-Hand that I cannot see him." It is by our Reason we are convinced of his Existence and his Perfections. But, if we are thoroughly convinced, and if his Being, as he is in himself absolutely perfect, righteous and good, be the real Object of our Understandings, Nature directs the Exercise of our Affections to him, which do not wholly depend on our Manner of apprehending their Objects, but our Persuasion concerning the Reality of them. Suppose a Person of eminent Worth in a Situation remote from our Acquaintance, and we have no other Knowledge of his Being and Virtues than we have of other distant Facts. — This Character will attract our Veneration, tho'

it may not affect our Minds so sensibly as Immobility & Contemplation would do. And, suppose us to have only natural, not sensible Evidence, that a Friend is so near as to remark our Words; and then, we should surely have a REGARD to his PRESENCE suitable to our Esteem of his Character.

In like Manner, if we believe that the invisible God is intimately present with us, that "in him we live and move and have our Being," and that he is acquainted, not only with our outward ACTIONS, but our most secret THOUGHTS, — What can be more rational than that we should form our CONDUCT with an Eye to his APPROBATION? That we should "walk before him," (as the Scripture expresses a religious Course of Life,) "and be perfect?" (i.e.) sincerely righteous & good as he is; this, one would think, must be inseparable from a firm Persuasion, & a high Esteem of the absolutely perfect moral Character.

There may be, and very probably will be an entirely different Manner of apprehending the divine Being and Perfections in the future State. There is no Difficulty in conceiving that the Human Mind may have Faculties and Ways of perceiving Objects wholly new, and of which we can form no Ideas; as we know that various intelligent Creatures are endued with various Capacities, whereby are conveyed

to them Ideas peculiar to themselves? — Why may we not suppose, that the Supreme-Being himself, & his glorious Attributes, shall be, the immediate Object of the Mind's Intuition, discerned not by the distant and unaffected Way of Reasoning from Effects to their Causes; but as clearly and directly as we now perceive the Objects of Sense, or even our own Powers and Operations, which the sacred Writers describe, by "seeing him Face to Face," and "knowing as we are known;" and illustrate the superior Excellence of it above our present Manner of conceiving the sublime Subject, by an Allusion to the Difference between the Knowledge of Children, and of grown Men. The Affections then will operate according to the clearer Views of the Understanding, in a Manner of which we have not now a distinct Notion. But since we find by Experience, that sensible things, (low as they are in their Nature, and of little Importance to the Ends of our Being, yet) do by their immediate Presence, and the strong Impression they make on our Minds, excite vehement Desires, & raise Sensations of Pleasure, which the cool & rational Consideration of the same Objects could never produce; and moral Qualities, even imperfect in their Kind, and but imperfectly understood, yet attract very intense Affection, and

isnt, & contemplated with great Delight; & we must conclude that infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, in Conjunction, (which gave Birth to the Universe, and is the sole Cause of all created Being, and all Felicity, seen nor darkly and thro a Glass, But shining upon thy Soul in its full unclouded Splendor,) will fill it with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, be the adequate Object of its higheſt Affections, the Center of Rest, its last End, and most compleat Happiness.

As we have said, the mean Time, abounds in Knowledge cold and languid Affections, & imperfect Enjoyment, belonging to our present State of Probation & Discipline, thro which we are passing to a more exalted Condition of felicity, & our Bliss, therefore, is without suspining at the Appointments of Providence, to improve the Capacities and Advantages we now enjoy, so as the proper End of them may be attained.

Particularly, Since our Knowledge of God is not by Intuition, but by Reflection & Reasoning, which is the proper Exercise of our own Powers, we ought to employ ourselves actively in them. We know that the Mind can turn its Thoughts & Attention to particular Objects, and use other Means which by Observation & Experience appear conducive to its Improvement in the Knowledge of them.

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In the present Case, this seems to be the principal Duty which the Supreme-Being requires of us. For since by the Constitution of our Nature, we have Affections which will of themselves arise towards him when known; and since we are endued with a Capacity, and furnished with the Means of knowing, rather than with the actual Knowledge of him; the most obvious Obligation on Creatures in such a State, and the most important Part of their Trial is, to improve that Capacity by deliberate Attention and Reasoning; and to apply themselves diligently to the Use of those Means.

It follows, that the Exercise of Sancte Piety, (all summed-up in the Love of God,) is always proportionable to our clear and distinct Perceptions of his Nature & Attributes, in a rational Way; & therefore, it is necessary to Religion that we preserve the free and undisturbed Use of our intellectual Powers. Our Affections to other Objects are excited by Sense without Consideration. The Imagination, which often misleads the Judgment, heightens their Fury; and the Passions which violently agitate the Soul, (and always need to be restrained rather than be inflamed,) seem, in their original Intention and within their proper Bounds, rather designed to serve the Purposes of the animal Life and our Condition.

In this World & often, she Sublime Illustrations of the
Blessed, and the Highest Justice of our Being's. But,

True Devotion, which is wholly founded in the
Understanding, always keeps pace with its calm &
deliberate Exercise; & the Rule by which we ought
to judge of its Sincerity, is not extrinsic Rapture &
vehement Emotion of Mind, but a constant Relig-
ion to the Will of God, and a steady Purpose of
approving ourselves to him in the whole Course of
our Actions; for, "This is the Love of God, that
we keep his Commandments." — John 3:22.

I shall only observe further, "The Weight and
Importance of this Duty before us is, &c. it is the
Molift and Great Commandment;" (i.e.) the Foun-
dation of all mankind's Religion; which,
there can be no Religion without a Regard to, which,
there is no other but this. "And, to love him
with all the Heart, and with all the Understanding,
and with all the Soul, and with all the Strength, and
our Neighbour as ourselves, is among them all, whole
Burnt Offerings and Sacrifices; for, such is not far
from the Kingdom of God." To Conclude,

Do we act in Concert with that Being; whose
Tender Mercy is over all his Works, "by showing
Mercy, as far as we can, in all ours?"

Do we Conscientiously Endeavour to discharge all
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the Duties he has enjoined us, without Reliance; & to submit to all his Dispensations, without Murmuring?

Do we address ourselves to him with that holy Fear, which awes the turbulent Passions into Composure; but does not depress the Spirit, or beget an abject and unmanly Way of thinking?

Do we, who look (or ought to look) up to him with Reverence, as the great Judge and Law-Giver of the Universe, chiefly delight to consider him under the endearing Characters of Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Benefactor?

Do we, before we compose ourselves to Rest, recommend ourselves to his almighty Care, "who neither slumbers nor sleeps?" — Do we, after our Refreshment, recommend ourselves to his Superintendency, who "maketh his Sun to rise upon the just and the unjust;" humbly desiring, that as that Sun dispels the Darkness and Unwholesomeness of the Night; so he, the great "Sun of Righteousness, who arose with Healing in his Wings," would disperse all Evil from before us; all Evil, whether of Mind, Body, or Estate?

Do we commit all our Concerns in general to his Providence, and Fatherly Goodness; and, upon every extraordinary Emergency, make a more particular

gular Application to him for his Direction, "who
ever seeketh them that seek him."

If we do, these, undoubtedly, are the genuine
Testimony, and significant Expressions of an undissimbl'd
Love to God, & they will procure for us the blessed
Effects of that infinite Love, which being "stronger
than Death," disarmed Death of its Sting, and the
Grave of its Victory.

Observe what a wonderful Effect this Sentiment
of Love is capable of producing in those Persons,
whose Hearts are tender, & susceptible of deep Im-
pressions: how great an Alteration it makes, not
only in the Course of their Conduct, but in their
very Sensations & Judgment. They think nothing
too much, which they can do, or undergo, for the
Sake of the beloved Person. They give up their
own Inclinations and Interest, even with Pleasure.
The hardest things become easy, and the most irk-
some Offices delightful, near the Object of their
Affection. They are not tired of their Affi-
quities, or greedy of any Recompence for them: happy, so
long as they are able to please, & amply rewarded
in the very Performance, and the kind Acceptance
of their Services.

How unlike are those who serve for hire! — No
Matter how little they do, provided you will but be
Serm. XLVIII. content

content with it. There is in their Motions a Sluggishness, a Reluctance, that perpetually demands the Spur. In brief, they are not serving you, but themselves: Neither Side is pleased: your Business is but ill-discharged; and their Employment is one continual Struggle against Difficulties.

Many excellent things have been spoken, & very justly, of many excellent Graces and Virtues: but there is none of them to be compared with that which is here recommended. — “It is (as we have seen,) the First and Great Commandment:” — It is that, on which “hang all the Law and the Prophets;” — & that finally, on which above all things our own Happiness depends.

“There be Nine Things which I have judged in mine Heart to be happy; and the Tenth I will utter with my Tongue. A Man that hath Joy of his Children, and he that liveth to see the Fall of his Enemy; — that dwelleth with a Wife of Understanding, and that hath not slipped with his Tongue; — that hath not served a Man more unworthy than himself; — that bath found Prudence; — that speaketh in the Ears of him that will hear: how great is he that findeth Wisdom? and none (of these) is above him that seareth the Lord: but the LOVE

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of the Lord passeth all things ; he that holdeth it,
to whom shall he be likened ?

SERMON XLIX.

On the Fear of God.

3 Pet. ii. 17. — "Fear God."

The Fear of God is taken in several States in holy Scripture: Sometimes it denotes, at large, the Whole Duty of Man; thus Moses assigns this as THE Reason why the Law of God was committed to a Standing Writing, and appointed to be read before the Children of Israel, that "they might hear, and learn to FEAR the Lord their God." — It is used in the same Latitude by holy David; "Come ye Children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the FEAR of the Lord." — At other Times, The Fear of God is more especially restrained to signify the devotional Duties of Religion, and the more solemn Worship of God: thus, "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of his Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all them that are found about him;" and, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, & swear by his Name;" — Accordingly, what is here expressed by

fearing God, our Saviour renders by Worshiping him; "Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve." But,

The Fear of God, in the most strict and proper Sense, (and in which I shall at present consider it,) signifies the Passion of Fear, as it implies an awful Sense of the Divine Majesty, when we consider what God is, and which necessarily ariseth in the Mind of every Man, who believes and habitually considers himself as living and acting in the Sight of an omnipotent Governor, of perfect Justice, Holiness and Purity, who sees every Thought, and every Action, who cannot be imposed upon, by any Hypocrisy; who, as certainly as there is any Difference between Good & Evil, cannot but approve the One, and disapprove the Other; and whose Government, as certainly as he has any Power at all, consists in rewarding what he approves, and punishing the Object of his Aversion. Of such a Governor as this, tho' we are sure he is induced with infinite Goodness, yet, when we consider him in all his Characters, we cannot but be afraid of him. — "Fear God."

In discoursing upon this Subject, I shall observe the following Method,

First, I shall state the true Notion of this Duty,
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II. The absolute Necessity of it, as a Principle of moral Actions, to preserve our Obedience; it being the Foundation of all Religion.

Concluding with the Motives conduced to the Furtherance of it. And,

First, I am to ascertain the true Notion of the Duty enjoined. And, there is the more Occasion for this; because Fear is a Passion, which is apt above all others to betray out Minds into anxious & distrustful Thoughts of our Maker, filling us with disconsolate Apprehensions of God's Wrath, till by Degrees, perhaps, Men abandon themselves to all the Horrors of a wild and raging Despair.

As it so highly concerns us, therefore, to have right Apprehensions of this Duty of fearing God, I shall lay-down these two Rules in Order to give us a just Idea of it.

First, That the Fear here expressed, is of such a Kind, as includes in it, a high Degree of Love. &

Secondly, That it implies a generous Trust and Confidence in God.

As to the First of these Particulars, (a filial and reverential Fear of God,) it is necessary, and is recommended to us in Scripture, upon a two-fold Account;

(*) Fear, in general, is that Passion of our Nature, whereby we are exoed to provide for our Security upon the Approach of Evil. But when this Description is applied to the Fear of God, we are not to apprehend that God can be the Author of any Effect that is evil in itself, tho' it may by Accident be evil to us: his severall Impositions are in themselves Acts of Justice and Righteousness, and flow from the Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature; though, with respect to us, they have the Evil of Punishment, and demand this Regard of Fear to him. But when Men represent the Divine Nature to their Minds, as the Author of Evil, as a Being averse from their Happiness, & armed with Power only for their Destruction; as an austere and rigorous Master, easily provoked, and always lifting up his Hand to take Vengeance.

Meditation — As to what effectually disposes us to serve and obey God; &c; As it renders our Service and Obedience, more acceptable to him.

If our Fear of God is accompanied by a sincere Love of him, we shall meet with no Difficulty in any of his Commands. For Love is a powerful and active Passion, and is not easily discouraged; indeed, when it is sincere, it delights to exert itself in the greatest Difficulties and severest Trials. — “The Love of God will constrain us.”

To pretend that we love God, while we live in Disobedience to his Laws, is a Contradiction to the very Notion and Nature of Love; and is an undeniably Argument that our Pretences to it, are at the Bottom of our Hearts, dissembled and insincere.

But further, As our Fear of God, when accompanied with our Love of him, effectually disposes us to serve and obey him; so will it also render our Service & Obedience, more acceptable to him.

I need not here enlarge to prove particularly, that our “Love to God is the First & Great Commandment,” and that, by necessary Consequence, there is nothing which recommends our Obedience more to God. Contrarywise, all our Obedience to God proceeds wholly from

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Such Conceptions must unavoidably raise in our Minds the Passions of Terror, a Dread of the Divine Nature mixed with Abhorrence and Aversion, as from an Enemy whom we hate, but dare not resist. But this so far from that Fear which is a Duty required by God, that even the Devils are constrained to do this Homage to his Majesty, who believe and tremble.

This is no other than that forced Respect a Captive pays to his Conqueror, a Slave to his Lord. And the Worship we are induced to offer from these mistaken Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, is a blasphemous Affront to his Perfections; since we worship him not as God, but as a cruel and tyrannical Being, the Idol of our Fancies, and Creature of our Superstition.

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servile Fear or Constraint how is it possible; that such a Principle as this, issue from thy mind further, should procure for us the Honour and Affection, or Friendship of God? It may indeed command the Knee; but, what hath it to do with the Heart? It may make us fall-down before God, but cannot incline us to "worship him with an holy Worship;" It may put Men upon certain rigid, tho' ridiculous Austerities; but, what are these things to that living, that holy Sacrifice, that "reasonable Service," which God requireth at our Hands? and which is animated by the free & generous Principle of Love? Except our "Faith, then, be such as worketh by Love," it will be wholly fruitless and ineffectual to our Salvation! (A)

(A) Notwithstanding what is here laid of the high Value of the free and generous Principle of Love in our Obedience, it would by no Means be thought wholly and altogether to exclude even such a Fear of God, as restrains Men from sin, purely from the Apprehension of suffering. — Fear is a good Disposition before greatest Repentance in, and perhaps the Repentance of most Men begins upon it. "The Fear of the Lord, (saith the wisest of Men,) is the Beginning of Wisdom." Undoubtedly, in the language of the Prophets, the Praise of is endareth forever. There is every necessary Fear of God, which attends the Conscience of a Sinner converted from a Course of Wickedness; which Fear, in its first Impression must be attended with execrable views of the Divine Justice against him; though he repented, and he reconciled to the Sinner upon his Repentance. This the Schools call an *initial* Fear of God, a Disposition of Mind no Way offensive to him, but which were very proper for a broken and contrite Heart.

The Fear of God, in the just and proper Notion of it, is such a Fear as a dutiful Child pays to his loving and beloved Parent, such as will restrain us from sinning against God, tho' he had threaten'd no Punishment against our Sins; (A) In a Word, It is only a more awfull Kind of Love, which excites us to obey God, upon the Account of his Perfections, and to "hate Sin with a perfect Hatred," not only as it makes us liable to Punishment, but as it is displeasing to him. (B) But further,

The Fear of God, as it implies our Love of him; so doth it also include in it a generous Hope and Confidence in him; For Hope is the great Spring of Industry; and the stronger it is, the more active and industrious it will make us.

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Heart, labouring under the Conviction of Sin, to be possessed of, when he looks upon God as his Judge. — A Sense of the Danger of our Sins may, by Degrees, beget in us a just Hatred and Abhorrence of them, and so, by the Grace of God, make-way for the more generous Passion and Principle of Love. It is well if Men can be prevailed upon to preserve their Innocence, or turn from their Iniquity, upon any Motives whatever: All that we intend, is, that such a Fear is a very low and imperfect Degree of the Duty here explained; and insufficient, if we carry it no further, to recommend our Obedience to God.

(A) *Obedientia; non servile Merit; sed Charitatis Affectione servanda.*
Nisi Timore Pena, sed Amore Iustitia.

(B) Love, if not allayed and tempered with Fear, and the Apprehensions of divine Justice, would betray the Soul into a lauguing Confidence.

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The Epicurean Notion of God , manifestly discards all Fear of him in every Kind and Degree : as nothing can be evil, that is not bebelid bye us for,

Edence and an ill-grounded Security : Fear, on the other Hand, if not sweetned & animated dy Love , would sink the Mind into a fatal Despondency. Fear , therefore, is placed in the Soul , as a Counterpoise to the more enlarged , kindly , and generous Affections ; and is in the human Constitution, as Weights are to some Machines, very necessary to adjust, regulate and balance the Motions of the fine , curious & active Springs . — Happy the Man who can command such a just and even Poise of these two Affections, that the One shall do nothing , but deter him from offending ; while the Other inspirits him with a hearty Desire of pleasing the Deity . Yet, Whichever of them we may imagine to be the prevailing Principle , he who proceeds in a steady, regular Practice of his Duty to God , without any presumptuous and deliberate Sins, may dismiss all Apprehensions and Misgivings concerning his Salvation . — It is true, “ God is Love ;” and he that obeys him, must obey him in Love ; but it is as true, that, wherever there is a sincere and uniform Obedience , upon Principle , there is such a Degree of Love, as will render us acceptable to God. For, “ in this we know that we love God , if we keep his Commandments.” A mere servile Fear, indeed, may be a Barr to our Salvation. But , What is a mere servile Fear ? Such a Fear, as clogs the Powers , and deadens the Activity of the Soul, by shutting-out the Consideration of God’s fatherly Goodness, and dwelling only on that of almighty Power, armed with Vengeance ; such a Fear as the unprofitable Servant, in the Parable of Talents , entertained of his Master , whom he misrepresented , as an “ austere Man, gathering where he had not strawed, & reaping where he had not sown ;” for which Reason he remained in a State of Inaction, and “ hid his Talent in a Napkin.” It is such a Fear, as the Devils have , who “ believe and tremble,” yet never obey ; One genuine “ Blacknes of Darkness,” without the least Glympse of Comfort. It is a religious Cowardice, which robs us of the Power of shunning those Dangers which we dread. But ,

60; to represent the all-seeing Governor of the Universe as a supine indolent Being, involved in his own

happy

A Fear which is productive of an even steady Habit of Obedience, is always a filial Fear, recommended and endeared by an acceptable Mixture and Proportion of Love. For, till a slavish Dread damps each lovely Idea, & blots-out each liberal Thought of the Deity, our Love of him is not extinguished ; and when a slavish Dread has erased these Impressions, then our Obedience, as well as our Love, must cease of Course. The Mind will stoop beneath the Burden, and sink overwhelmed with the Load of Despair. It is, we think, impossible that any Man should habitually, in the Main, and conscientiously discharge his

Duty to "the Father of Mercies and God of Comforts," who is able & willing to do for him "abundantly above what he can ask or think," without esteeming, honouring and loving him. He may, indeed, at first, obey him only, because it is his Duty to serve the greatest of Beings, whose Power "ruleth over all :" but he will sooner or later obey him likewise, because it is his Inclination to serve the best of Beings, whose "Mercy is over all his Works." — Suppose a Man lost in a great Measure to all ingenious Motives, yet, persuaded by the Terrors of the Lord to break-off his Sins by Repentance, he could not effectually set about this Work without some Regard to God's amiable Attributes, without some Confidence in his Goodness, which always implies some Degree of Love. He may fear him, as an "Avenger to execute Wrath" upon the impenitent ; but he must confide in him too, as One not willing that any would perish, but that all should fulfil the Terms, and enjoy the Benefit of eternal Salvation. And, tho' Fear chiefly was the Beginning of his Wisdom, yet long Practice of Virtue will ripen into an Habit ; and a settled Habit will give him a Relish for Acts of Virtue ; till at last he "tastes and sees how gracious the Lord is", who has abridged him of no Pleasure, but what a discreet and loving Father would withhold from his only Son, and enjoined him no Duty, but what is essential to, and interwoven with his real Happiness.

happy Tranquillity, who will give no Attention to the Events that happen to Mankind, and have no Concern in their Happiness or Misery, is to destroy every Relation we can stand-in to him; and where there is no Intercourse, Dependance, or Union, there is no Room for Fear, or for any other Passion and Affection.— Superstition, on the contrary, produces a servile and dismaying Fear: it trembles at the Apprehension of a Deity; mistakes the God of Justice for the God of Vengeance; & can view him in no other Attitude but with the up-lifted Thunder-Bolt in his Hand. The Fear of him is the Dread of an arbitrary Tyrant, who delights in Cruelty, & scatters Terrors amongst his Subjects without Reason

He will at last love to serve him, whose Service he experiences to be perfect Freedom. For good Men go on from Strength to Strength, without confining themselves to any determined Proportion of Goodness, beyond which they are to proceed no further.

To a considerate Mind, that is all Harmony within, that is in perfect Good-Humour with every thing about it; the Deity must appear like what he is, in perfect Beauty; all-loving, and all-lovely, without any forbidding & terrifying Appearances; just as a deep Stream, when clear and unruffled by any Storm, represents the Sun and Firmament in a gentler and milder Lustre; far more beautiful itself, by reflecting the Beauties of Heaven. — Whatever uncomfortable Notices we entertain of God, they are either the just Forebodings of a Mind disturbed with Guilt, or the gloomy Imagery of a Fancy deeply tinctured with Melancholy. A firm and persevering Progress in Virtue will remove that horrible Dread of the Deity, which sometimes overwhelmes the guilty.

son or Distinction; and were there any just Foundation for it, it must be owned, that in this Case it would be Malice, and not Goodness or Justice, that made us afraid. But,

When we contemplate the Deity in that true Light in which Reason and Revelation conspire to place him, how widely different is our religious Fear from this? It will not then arise from the Apprehensions we may have of any single tremendous Attribute of the Divine Nature, without any Consideration of the rest; but will result from the Idea of a complete Combination and Union of all possible Perfections in one simple and undivided Essence; in which a thorough Harmony of infinite Knowledge, Power, Justice, Holiness, Goodness and Truth, is forever preserved, and gives us an infallible Assurance, that the Judge of all the Earth will do right in all his Proceedings with the Children of Men. But,

Even this right Apprehension of the Deity will produce a different Fear in different Persons. The Sinner, who is conscious to himself of having incurred God's Displeasure, must think, (if he will think as he ought,) that divine Goodness and Mercy cannot be exercised in his Favour in such a Manner as is inconsistent with divine Justice & Holiness; for this would be to discompose the perfect Harmony of the

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divine

divine Attributes, by letting them at Variance with one another. He knows that Punishment is due to Transgression; and, if he persists in his Offences, he will have Reason, upon every Suggestion of Conscience, to be alarmed at the Danger he has thereby been warned to shun. For, how can he think, that God will not, after all, assert the Holiness, and vindicate the Authority, and punish the Violation, of his Laws? Or how can he persuade himself, that Mercy should so far prevail against Judgment, as to confound Right and Wrong, and overthrow the first Principles of Equity, by supposing, that there will be one Event to the Righteous & to the Wicked, to him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. (4)

The Fear of God, then, as of a righteous Judge, who is the Hater and Punisher of Iniquity, is a very just and rational Fear in a Sinner, who is conscious to himself of having incurred the Displeasure of the Almighty. And, well might he tremble at the Sentence of infinite Justice, were it not tempered and allayed by no less infinite Goodness & Mercy.

How to reconcile these, fell not within the Reach of Man's Conception; But God hath revealed it to him in the Mystery of his Redemption; wherein Justice and Mercy are met-together, & have kindly

^{ly} **F**ear that servile Dread which we reprove as criminal, we must be careful to distinguish that Terror and Astonishment which is spread over the Conscience of a Sinner, when he first begins to reflect on the Danger of his State, and the Penalties he has incurred from the Justice of God. For, tho' this Fear, in its first Impressions, be attended with uncomfortable Views of the Divine Nature, and attends chiefly to the Extent of his Power, and the Rigour of his Justice; yet whenever it is effectual to our Conversion, and engages our Application to appease his Anger, it cannot be without some Confidence in his Goodness, and a Regard to the more amiable Attributes of the Deity; and must consequently have also a less perfect Degree of that filial Reverence recommended by Religion. For,

If this Terror were merely that servile Dread which represents God as an implacable, inexorable Being, the Soul under such an Impression would sit down unactive, overwhelmed with an horrible Despair; and never engage in a fruitless Attempt to appease a Power, whom no Prayers could entreat, nor Repentance reconcile.

It is plain therefore that tho' this Fear be not that composed Reverence, with which the Soul looks on God in a State of confirmed Piety, yet neither is it That servile Dread which flies from him as an hostile, unfriendly Being, delighting in the Misery of his Creatures. And therefore some of the Schools have used a middle Term to express this Affection, and have called it an *initial* Fear of God; a Disposition so far from being offensive to him, that it seems to be properly that "brakes and contrite Heart," with which a Soul under the Conviction of Sin ought to look upon its Judge; and what the Scripture

ly embraced each other: the One strictly requiring, the Other graciously accepting, an Atonement for Transgressions by the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, as the Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.

This wonderful & gracious Dispensation of Mercy to sinful Men, conscious of their Offences against God, and ignorant of the Means of Reconciliation, has placed him in a new Relation to us, & a milder Light. The Torment of Fear remains only for unrepenting Guilt. Fear, in its strict Sense, (which is the mere Dread of impending Evil,) is no longer the Passion of a Christian: the more emboldening Passions of Hope, Affiance, Complacency, Joy, and Love, enter into the Composition of this Fear, and turn it into Reverence and Honour. The Fear that possesses a good Christian, is a filial Fear; the Fear that is impressed upon the Mind of a well-nurtured Child, from the Authority of a discreet and tender Parent — so wisely and affectionately exercised, that Love is produced even by Discipline, & Reverence by Indulgence. He knows that the Government he is under, is righteous, mild, and good; and that his Happiness depends upon his Submission to it. He looks upon his Governor, as his best Friend and Benefactor; & he therefore fears to transgress, because he is afraid to offend.

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From

divine Attributes, by setting them at Variance with one another. He knows that Punishment is due to Transgression; and, if he persists in his Offences, he will have Reason, upon every Suggestion of Conscience, to be alarmed at the Danger he has thereby been warned to shun. For, how can he think, that God will not, after all, assert the Holiness, and vindicate the Justice of God? — *the Beginning of Wisdom*, emphatically calls "the Beginning of Wisdom;" a Temper which, in the same Proportion as we apprehend the Justice of God to be pacified by our Repentance, will gradually improve into that filial Reverence accompanied with Love, which is the proper Affection of a confirmed Piety. See Note (A), Page 108.

These Distinctions of the Fear of God give us a clear and easy Reconciliation of those seeming Inconsistencies of Scripture, with Respect to this Affection: for when St. John says, "perfect Love casteth out Fear;" & again, "he that feareth, is not made perfect in Love;" these Assertions can no otherwise consist with those Scriptures which enjoin the Fear of God, and recommend it as the whole of our Duty, than by understanding the former either of that servile Dread which Reprobates & Devils have of God, or rather of that *initial* Fear which attends the imperfect Conversion of a Sinner; the latter, of that filial Reverence, which is the Strength and Ornament of the Soul, in a composed State of Religion.

If our Conversion, therefore, from a State of Sin to God, is attended with terrible Apprehensions of God's Severity and Power, yet let not this discourage us; since, (as already observed) this is not that slavish Dread which destroys Religion, but "the Beginning of Wisdom;" an Impression of divine Grace on the Soul, which, duly cultivated, will end in Confidence in the Mercy, and Pleasure the Service of God. The Divine Nature will gradually appear more amiable to us, and even our present Fears will improve our Affections: the Mercy of his Pardon will endear him to our Gratitude, and as we have much forgiven, we shall love much.

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From

From the Nature of this religious Fear, which, in the Heart of a good Christian, is always mixed and tempered with Love, Gratitude and Affiance, the Principle of Obedience is more frequently proposed to us in the New Testament, under the Notion of "the Love of God," than of "the Fear of him;" tho', in Effect, they are one and the self-same compound Principle. For,

If the Mystery of Man's Redemption reveals to us the tender Mercies of God, displayed in a wonderful Manner, beyond all our Conceptions and Hopes, it must at the same Time, raise in us the most awful Ideas of his Justice and Purity, and infinite Abhorrence of Sin; the Malignity of which may be justly estimated from the invaluable Price of that Sacrifice which was the Expiation of it; and the Greatness of God's Displeasure against it, from the Measure of the Love which he bore to his only-begotten Son.

These Considerations of Mercy & Severity, which ought never to be disunited, will always preserve in the Mind of every true Christian, right Apprehensions of the divine Nature. They will represent God as graciously reconciled to returning Sinners; but who cannot be reconciled to Sin. They will represent him in the endearing Relations of his Cre-

from a Preacher, Raisener, Friend, and Father; but they will represent him likewise Under the awful Character of his Governor and Judge; who is of power Exceeding to behold Iniquity who searches the Heart of Man, and scrutinizes the Thoughts & Actions; who mercifully accepts his willing though imperfect Services, but will severely punish the rebellious and incorrigible Offender, &c &c

These Sentiments will produce in him a reverential Love, Confidence, without Presumption; and Fear without Distress. The Consideration of the Greatness of the Power & Majesty of God will not terrify and confound him; the Apprehensions of his infinite Justice, in Conjunction with his infinite Wisdom & Goodness, will not overwhelm him with a desponding Dread, but will quicken and enliven his Obedience & Nor, on the contrary, will any fond Persuasions of unconditional, indiscriminate Mercy to Sinners, incline him to think, that he will remit the Punishment of unrepented of, unatoned for, Sin. And a Word; The Contemplation of the Divine Nature will furnish him with every inducement that the greatest and best of Beings can lay upon him, to love & honour, to fear, adore, & obey him. Holy David, therefore, argues very well, when he makes the Goodness of God the Foundation of

VIII
On the Fear of God.

: our religious Worship & Service ; There is Mercy with thee, O Lord, therefore shall thou be feared." Accordingly, Solomon represents an holy and a generous Trust in God, as naturally flowing from his Duty of fearing him, " To the Lord, (says he,) is strong Confidence." And the wise Son of Sirach, " The Spirit of those that fear the Lord, shall live ; for their Hope is in him that liveth ~~them~~." We should, therefore, be very and exceeding cautious, how we entertain any Doctrines or Notions of God, as representing himself Mankind in any unfavourable and dishonorable Aspect. No man can fear the Lord, then, to have a filial and reverential Awe of him. — This Affection we must have towards him, inasmuch, as it at once effectually disposeth us to serve and obey him, & renders our Service and Obedience more acceptable to him; always remembering, that to not fear the Lord, is to depart from Evil," and not only to do, but " love the thing that good is ;" & to worship him as God, "(i.e.) as possessed of every adorable Perfection, and no Way giving-place to any dark and desponding Thoughts of him, as thinking him a God of arbitrariness, Power and absolute Will, and, in such judging the World by a blind and irresistible Decree."

Principle this, A not only highly inconsistent with the bright & noble, which we have of the Attributes and Perfections of the Divine Nature, but shew also a visible Tendency, (instead of an awful Love, and generous Trust in God,) to produce in the Minds of Men, dark and unworthy Thoughts of him, and to paint the most frightful Images of Horror and Despair upon them. (A) Upon

(A) The frequent Mistakes of Men, as to this Object of their Fear, and the Respect due to God, has occasioned the Distinction of a servile or superstitious, and a filial or religious Fear. The former is a Dishonour to God; the latter we are in Duty obliged to; as it is the Spring and Motive of our Obedience.

To represent the Divine Nature, as a Being averse to our Happiness, and armed with Power only to destroy; as an austere, rigorous Master, easily provoked, and always ready to take Vengeance, must naturally raise in our Minds a Dread of, and Aversion to him. But such a Fear is not required by God. This the Devils do, who believe and tremble. This is like that forced Respect which a Captive pays to his Conqueror, or Slave to his Lord. But such Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, are a blasphemous Affront to his Perfections.

The Fear which is acceptable to God, is a filial, religious Fear. An awful Reverence of the Divine Nature, proceeding from a just Esteem and Regard to his Perfections, which produces in us an Inclination to his Service, and an Unwillingness to offend him. This is a Duty which all Inferiors owe to their Superiors; a Respect which implies a Mixture of Love and Fear. For, tho' Religion demands our Reverence to God, as that sovereign Power from whom we derive our Being, the Judge of our Actions, the Author & Disposer of our Happiness; and represents him adorned with Majesty and Honour; to whose Authority all things in Heaven and Earth do bow and obey;

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Upon the Whole of this Argument, — The Imperfection of our Virtue, joined to the Consideration of God's absolute Rectitude of Holiness, will scarce permit that Perfection of Love, which entirely casts out all Fear; yet Goodness is the Object of Love to all Creatures, who have any Degree of it in themselves, and Consciousness of a real Endeavour to approve ourselves to him, joined with the Consideration of his Goodness, as it quite excludes servile Dread and Horror, so it is plainly a reasonable Ground for Hope of his Favour.

Neither Fear, then, nor Hope, nor Love, are excluded: and One or Other of these will prevail, according to the different Views we have of God, & ought to prevail, according to the different Changes we find in our own Character.

There is a Temper of Mind made up of, or which follows from all Three, Fear, Hope, & Love; [viz.] Resignation to the divine Will, which is the general Temper belonging to this State: which ought

XII. 2

to be the habitual Frame of our Mind and Heart, and to be exercised in ~~proper~~ Seasons more distinctly, in acts of Devotion. And now,

What is there in this Tribute of religious Fear that is unworthy of God to require, or Man to pay? Shall not He exact that Reverence & Honour which is due to him as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Governor, and Judge? And shall not we fall low on our Knees before his Foot-Stool, acknowledge our Dependance, adore his Majesty and Condescension, and stand in Awe of him that ought to be feared? Surely, it is not Tyranny in our Lord and Master to command this our reasonable Service, nor is it Servility in Man, but it is his Privilege and his Honour, thus to fear him.

Sermon

... much has been done to smear his name with calumny and abuse.

SERMON L.

... was built upon the rock of Christ.

On the same Subject.

... by the grace of God, and salvation shall hold.

2 Pet. ii. 17. — "Fear God."

... we will now proceed to the first part of our subject.

... we will now proceed to the first part of our subject.

Our Passions are the Springs which actuate the Powers of our Nature : if these are either too weakly or too strongly moved, or misled by false Apprehensions of the Object, the Productions must be proportionably defective or irregular. And since the Fear of God is a Passion of the first and principal Influence in Religion, it is of the greatest Importance that it be so formed and settled, as to give it a proper Force and Direction. With this View I have already explained the true Notion and Nature of it ; and shall now therefore proceed,

an II. To consider it as a Principle, &c. — (under)

Support of Virtue among Men, is the Sense upon their Minds of a supreme Governour and Judge of the Universe, who will finally and effectually reward what is in itself essentially worthy of Reward, and punish what is worthy of Punishment. To a perfect and unerring Mind, incapable of being de-

ceived,

(*) The only Motive that can be imagined of our Obedience to the Laws of any Person, are either the Value and Certainty of the Rewards he proposes, together with the Assurance of his Inclination and Ability to execute them ; or an Apprehension of his Justice and Severity in punishing our Disobedience. Now,

Neither of these, exclusive of the other, is the true Principle of our Obedience to God : for, if our Observance of the divine Laws proceed merely from an Opinion of his Inclination to our Happiness, whenever his Providence or Justice should think fit to visit us with any great Affliction, he would no longer appear that kind benevolent Being we before worshipped ; and consequently, the Motive that engaged our Submission would lose its Force upon us. It was with this imperfect Principle of Duty that Satan reproached the Integrity of Job, "Dost Job (said he) serve God for nought ? Hast thou not made an Hedge about him, and about all that he hath ? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land. But put forth thine Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face." Indeed,

If the divine Laws were proposed to our Observance, with no other Motive than the Advantages attending it, they would be little more than an Advice, and have but a very weak Influence on the far greater Part of Mankind, who are more inclined to pursue their Happiness in the Satisfaction that lies before them in this Life, than to wait on the Promises of a future Reward. It is, therefore necessary to engage the Fancies of Men by the Assurance of such Promises as by the Weight and Certainty of them, will overbalance the Temptations of temporal Pleasure. — On the other side,

If our Obedience were the Effect only of a kind of the Power of Tongue, or Oath, it would be no better than the Submission of Slave to the Tyranny of an insolent Master, & must want that Cloathing of Vertue which alone can make our Obedience acceptable to God. And the express command of our Saviour is in Command 4, to

ceived, and which is exalted above all possible Temptation; so such a one, the intrinsick Reason of Things, the essential Excellency of Truth and Right, is in itself a steady and always sufficient Motive of Action. But Men, who, when they know what is Right, and necessarily approve it, yet at the same Time find "another Law in their Members warring against the Law of their Mind," urging them with strong Passions, and uneasy Appetites; and these sollicited, moreover, with perpetual Temptations from without, with Allurements of Pleasure and Profit, with Baits of Power and Ambition, with Examples of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with Threatnings also of perpetual Persecutions in different Kinds, if they adhere steadfastly to the Interests of Truth and Virtue: To such Beings as these; to finite, changeable, and fallible Creatures; 'tis very necessary, that the eternal intrinsick Reason of Things, the essential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right, considered as a Motive of Action, should be supported and strengthened by a constant and lively Sense upon their Minds, of an universal Supreme Governor, who being essentially the Fountain of all Perfection, the Truth & Reason of Things, &c the unalterable Right of every Case, are consequently the eternal

Serm. L.

Laws

SERMON L.

II. TO COMMENCE THE PRACTICE OF
THE PROFESSION IN A COLLEGE,
SCHOOL, OR SEMINARY OF LEARNERS,
BUT NOT SO CLOSELY AS TO EXCLUDE
THESE FROM THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION,
BUT SO CLOSELY AS TO EXCLUDE
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BUT NOT SO CLOSELY AS TO EXCLUDE
THESE FROM THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION,

II. To consider it as a Principle of Moral-Action,
being the Foundation of Religion. For,
Though Virtue is, indeed, amiable, absolutely,
in its own Nature; and, if the World could possibly
be supposed to subsist without the Government,
and even without the Being of God, still the Na-
ture of Good and Evil would be what it is, and
Virtue would be in itself unalterably excellent,
and Vice forever blame-worthy; Yet, the great
Support of Virtue among Men, is the Sense upon
their Minds of a supreme Governour and Judge of
the Universe, who will finally and effectually re-
ward what is in itself essentially worthy of Reward,
and punish what is worthy of Punishment. To a
perfect and unerring Mind, incapable of being de-

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Neither of these, exclusive of the other, is the true Principle of our Obedience to God; for, if our Observance of the divine Law proceed merely from an Opinion of his Inclination to our Happiness, whenever his Providence or Justice would think fit to visit us with any great Affliction, he would no longer appear that kind benevolent Being we before worshipped; and consequently, the Motive that engaged our Submission would lose its Force upon us. It was with this imperfect Principle of Duty that Satan reproached the Integrity of Job: "Doth Job (said he) serve God for nought? Hast thou not made an Hedge about him, and about all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land. Doth not thy Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face." Indeed,

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Major Obstacles view the Effect only of a Head of the Powers
Worship of God, & would be no better than the Submission of
Slaves to the Tyranny of an insolent Master, & must want the Church
of Christ to look above the number one Obstacle, & consider God
the Supreme Government, or the Authority of his Command.

ceived, and which is exalted above all possible Temptation; to such a one, the intrinsic Reason of Things, the essential Excellency of Truth and Right, is in itself a steady and always sufficient Motive of Action. But Men, who, when they know what is Right, and necessarily approve it, yet at the same Time find "another Law in their Members warring against the Law of their Mind," urging them with strong Passions, and uneasy Appetites; and these sollicited, moreover, with perpetual Temptations from without, with Allurements of Pleasure and Profit, with Baits of Power and Ambition, with Examples of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with Threatnings also of perpetual Persecutions in different Kinds, if they adhere steadfastly to the Interests of Truth and Virtue: To such Beings as these; to finite, changeable, and fallible Creatures; 'tis very necessary, that the eternal intrinsic Reason of Things, the essential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right, considered as a Motive of Action, should be supported and strengthened by a constant and lively Sense upon their Minds, of an universal Supreme Governor, who being essentially the Fountain of all Perfection, the Truth & Reason of Things, & the unalterable Right of every Case, are consequently the eternal

Serm. L.

Laws

...H his huius m...o to erat I amid ad ed et
...ib o...m an... h...m...x...d or his
SERMON L.

III. TO COMMENCE WITH THE PRACTICE
expect that Submission should be accompanied with an entire Trust in his Goodness, and Affection to his service: by the former, we admire him as the Lord and Governour of the World; by the latter, as our Father which is in Heaven.

The proper Motive, therefore, of our Christian Obedience is that Fear which is made perfect by Love; that filial Reverence which has in it a just Mixture of both these Affections, and acts upon our Lives with the Force of both.

This is a Principle adapted to every Passion and Faculty of our Nature, in every State and Condition of Life; and, when rightly formed, will direct us to the just Performance of our Duty in all: will equally prepare our Patience for the Day of Adversity, and engage our Gratitude to the Mercies of God; will suggest Tears to our Repentance, and Hallelujahs to our Praise; will make us receive his Favours as the Blessings, his Punishments as the Corrections of a Father. The Awe of his Majesty will keep us from Presumption, and the Promises of his Mercy from Despair; for, "as his Majesty is, so is his Mercy." Both these Attributes will be equally in our View, & concur to form the Disposition of the Soul.

If this Principle, therefore, were thoroughly fixed in the Minds of Men, we should be ashamed of Hypocrisy, & tremble at Profaneness; we should neither hope that our Treachery could escape the Notice, nor our Blasphemies the Vengeance, of God. Our secret Actions would be as regular as our public, our Devotions as great in the Closet as they appear in the Temple. We should perform every Instance of our Duty, not with Eye-service, as Men-pleasers, but with the same Sincerity with which we comply with the Desires of our Friend, or our Father: the least of his Commands would appear venerable to us, and the most difficult, not grievous. In a Word,

This Affection will give Warmth to our Zeal, and Spirit to our Devotions; will animate our Faith, enliven our Hope, and extend our Charity; will deter us from Sin, and encourage us in Duty.

ceived, and which is exalted above all possible Temptation; to such a one, the intrinsic Reason of Things, the essential Excellency of Truth and Right, is in itself a steady and always sufficient Motive of Action. But Men, who, when they know what is Right, and necessarily approve it, yet at the same Time find "another Law in their Members warring against the Law of their Mind," urging them with strong Passions, and uneasy Appetites; and these sollicited, moreover, with perpetual Temptations from without, with Allurements of Pleasure and Profit, with Baits of Power and Ambition, with Examples of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with Threatnings also of perpetual Persecutions in different Kinds, if they adhere steadfastly to the Interests of Truth and Virtue: To such Beings as these; to finite, changeable, and fallible Creatures; 'tis very necessary, that the eternal intrinsic Reason of Things, the essential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right, considered as a Motive of Action, should be supported and strengthened by a constant and lively Sense upon their Minds, of an universal Supreme Governor, who being essentially the Fountain of all Perfection, the Truth & Reason of Things, & the unalterable Right of every Case, are consequently the eternal

Serm. L.

Laws

Laws of his Kingdom: which, by his universal Power & Government over all, he will as certainly support and maintain; finally rewarding Virtue, and punishing Vice; as 'tis certain there is a Difference between Good and Evil, and that infinite Wisdom cannot be insensible of That Difference.

A firm and settled Persuasion of the Reality and Certainty of this great Truth, that we are continually under the Inspection of such a supreme Governor & Judge; of an omnipresent Spirit, "in whom we live, and move, & have our Being," & to whom our very Thoughts are as open as our Actions; cannot but fill the Mind of every considerate Person, with a just Awe and Fear of him: "When we consider, we cannot but be afraid of him;" - Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical Power; but as of a just, and powerful, and wise Governour, whose Laws are reasonable and necessary to be obeyed, & from whose just Displeasure the Disobedient can by no Power or Artifice be protected.

The Ground of this Fear, Job tells us, is Reason and Consideration: "When I consider, (says he,) I am afraid of him." Atheistical and profane Men suppose, on the contrary, that the Ground of this Fear is Timorousness.

self of Tempor., - Superstition, - customary Tradition, - or political Fiction. (n) They pretends, that Morality is independent upon Religion; that the Idea of Virtue is distinct from all Considerations of Duty; that Virtue has in itself sufficient Authority to bind Mankind, as a Law, without the additional Enforcement of the Fear of God.

(o) It is not my Design to enter into any nice & metaphysical Disquisitions concerning the Origin and Nature of moral Virtue. Let it Be deduced from the abstracted Relation and Fitness of things; or from the eternal & immutable Difference of Right and Wrong; and define it after what Manner you please: - let it be right and self-consistent Reason: - let it be the Love of Order, or a just Proportion & Harmony of the Mind: - let it be a System of Action consonant to the Perfection of Nature, or dictated to the Good of the whole human Species, of which we are a Part: — View it in whatever Light Speculation can place it; yet still it will be the Law of God; and the Sanction of this Law must be the Fear of him. For, if Virtue and Vice arise from what is suitable or unsuitable to the Constitution of Nature; let it be

(A) See this confuted in Note (A) Vol. III. page 378, &c.

remembered, that all Nature is the Creature of God, and that he established that very Order & Relation of things from which they are supposed to derive their Ellence. — Is the Distinction betwixt Right and Wrong eternal and immutable? So is the Nature of God; and his Government cannot be different from what it is. Are we, therefore, to reject his Government, because he makes that Distinction to be the Rule of it, which we suppose to be as fixt & unalterable as it is reasonable & right? — Is the Practice of Virtue the same thing with the Exercise of right Reason? then certainly it is the Will of God that we should be virtuous; and we have the Happiness to serve a Master who requires from us a reasonable Service, and cannot require any other. — Does Virtue flow from an exact Proportion & Harmony of the Faculties of the Mind? it must then be the Design of the God of Order that this Harmony should be preserved; & we transgresis his Law as well as the Law of Nature, if we suffer the inferior Faculties to usurp the Authority of the superior one. — Is the Virtue of every Individual made to consist in acting for the general Good of the whole human Species? and have we no Obligations, are we not to lift-up a single Thought, to the great Creator and Governor of the whole Race of Man?

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kind; who suited our Nature to our Situation; who formed & fitted us for the Advantages of Society; & who implanted in us those benevolent Affections, upon which the Happiness of it is supposed to depend? In short, no Principles but those of Atheism can let us clear of our religious Obligations; and we must of Necessity discard the Fear of God & the Belief of him the same Time.

Since therefore this is the true Principle of a Christian Obedience, the only Foundation on which the whole Superstructure of Religion can rise with a proper Strength and Beauty, let us labour to form in our Minds such just Apprehensions of the Deity, as may possess our Souls with this Reverence towards him. Such as are our Conceptions of God, such will be our Affection towards him; and such is the Affection of the Heart, such will be the Service and Obedience we shall pay him.

Let us, therefore, take Care neither to affront his Majesty by Want of Reverence, nor dishonour his Goodness by a servile Dread of his Power. Both are Defects equally destructive to Religion; the One tending to exclude it; the other hindering God from the Work of Learning, on the Production of Subtlety, but it grows up with our Reason, & is the Foundation of natural Conscience, which acquaints

remembered, that all Nature is the Creature of God, and that he established that very Order & Relation of things from which they are supposed to derive their Essence. — Is the Distinction betwixt Right and Wrong eternal and immutable? so is the Nature of God; and his Government cannot be different from what it is. Are we, therefore, to reject his Government, because he makes that Distinction to be the Rule of it, which we suppose to be as fixt & unalterable as it is reasonable & right? — Is the Practice of Virtue the same thing with the Exercise of right Reason? then certainly it is the Will of God that we should be virtuous; and we have the Happiness to serve a Master who requires from us a reasonable Service, and cannot require any other. — Does Virtue flow from an exact Proportion & Harmony of the Faculties of the Mind? it must then be the Design of the God of Order that this Harmony should be preserved; & we transgres's his Law as well as the Law of Nature, if we suffer the inferior Faculties to usurp the Authority of the superior one. — Is the Virtue of every Individual made to consist in acting for the general Good of the whole human Species? and have we no Obligations, are we not to lift-up a single Thought, to the great Creator and Governor of the whole Race of Mankind

tending to extinguish it, by inclining us to a Contempt of God; the Other to corrupt us by Superstition. As therefore the Reflection on his Goodness should reconcile us with Delight to the Duties he enjoins; so must we remember that we are to serve him with Fear; and, even in those Acts of our Worship which principally engage the Mind in contemplating the Wonders of his Love, not forget the Honour due to his Majesty, but rejoice unto him with Reverence; and while we approach him with the Confidence of Sons, humble ourselves before him with the Resignation of Creatures and the Contrition of Sinners.

Having thus, &c. — (under)

Having thus far considered the Effects of this religious Principle, in giving Perfection to the System of Morality, and in regulating and increasing the Power of every subordinate Principle that can contribute to its Support, I shall briefly take notice of some distinguishing Properties that belong to it.

As First, The Fear of God is a Principle of the most general Use, and is Level to every Man's Understanding.

Curious Speculations concerning the Nature of Virtue, refined Disquisitions into its Origin, & Descriptions of its Beauty, are far above the Reach & Capacity of the Bulk of Mankind; and many of them have rather thrown Obscurity than Light upon the Subject. But the Knowledge of the Fear of God is not the Work of Learning, or the Production of Subtlety; but it grows up with our Reason, & is the Foundation of natural Conscience, which acquaints

quaints every Man, that he is accountable for his Actions, and which it is not in his Power to stifle or suppress. And, altho this religious Fear will become a more rational and active Principle, in Proportion as our Conceptions of the Divine Nature are just & true; yet no Man can have sufficient Cause to plead Want of Information in this Particular, since the glorious Light of the Gospel has been diffused thro' the World. For this has explained every thing that wanted Explanation, relative either to the Nature, or the Dispensations of God; and has made that Knowledge familiar to the unlearned, which the Wisdom of the wisest could never attain to.

But further, The Fear of God is a Principle also, of all others, best suited to the Nature and Condition of Man.

The Desire of Happiness is inseparable from a rational and self-conscious Being; and his Nature directs him to pursue it by every Method which right Reason can prescribe. And both Nature & Reason will direct him to pursue that Happiness which is substantial, permanent, and secure. But, It is God alone who can make this Happiness the Consequence & the Reward of Virtue. Virtue, therefore, must pay an unlimited Obedience and Honour to him, from whom it is to receive a mighty Recompence.

pense of Reward. Nor does it cease to be Virtue
for having this Recompence in View. The Nature
of Virtue is not altered by super-inducing stronger
Obligations to the Practice of it, which make it our
Duty, or because Duty leads to Happiness; Nor is
the virtuous Man less virtuous, if he cannot re-
nounce his Nature, but has Respect both to the O-
bligations and to the Reward of Virtue at the same
Time. Our Condition and Circumstances, as well
as our Nature, direct us to the same religious Prin-
ciple.

We are the Creatures of God, brought into Life
by his Power, and sustained in it, every Moment of
our Existence, by his Providence. To him we are
indebted for all our Faculties, Enjoyments & Hopes.
We cannot escape his Inspection, withdraw ourselv-
es from his Government, or throw off our Depen-
dence. We are moreover weak and impotent: we
are surrounded with innumerable Dangers, & are li-
able to Accidents continually, which we can neither
foresee nor prevent. We have not Strength suffi-
cient to engage with those Evils which we cannot av-
oid; nor will our Fortitude bear us up under the
Pressure of them, when they are grievous & perhaps
incurable. We are also frail and irresolute. We
cannot maintain our Virtue against strong Temptat-

tions and treacherous Allurements ; and our own Hearts will betray us , & give a ready Admission to Vice , when it puts on every Appearance that can please & deceive . — Our Existence , therefore , and Dependance make the religious Principle natural to us ; our Obligations call for it ; and our Weakness and Frailty require its Assistance .

This Consideration suggests the last Property I shall mention belonging to this Principle , [viz] the great Power & Prevalency of it , in giving Support to Virtue in all possible Cases and Emergencies . For , Let us consider here again , what the Fear of God imports . It consists in that awful Reverence & Honour , which is due to the Majesty of the great Creator , Preserver , and Ruler of the World ; in that Trust & Affiance which arises from the Wisdom & Rectitude of his Government ; in that filial Veneration , Love , and Gratitude , which is owing to the affectionate Care and constant Protection of his Providence ; and in a submissive Confidence and Hope , that he who redeemed us by his Mercy , and who sanctifies us by his Grace , will safely conduct us , thro all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life , to Glory , and Honour , and Immortality . Upon this Basis we shall stand secure ; with this Armour our Virtues will be impregnable . For , un-

(*) See the latter Part of the affixed Note , Page 122 . der

der the mighty Protection of this Principle, we shall have much greater Strength than our own; God himself, so long as we have the Fear of him before our Eyes, will be our Defence, & no Enemy will be able to approach to hurt us. All the flattering Allurements of Vice will lose their Charms: no Difficulties will discourage; no Dangers affright, nor Sufferings dispirit us. It is a Guard that Prosperity cannot corrupt; - a Wall, which Adversity cannot beat down. It is the Safeguard and Ornament of Youth; will restrain its unruly Passions, and turn its Follies into Sobriety. It gives Stability to the perfect Man, and places his Feet upon a Rock; for it will fix his Views upon true Happiness, direct his Judgment in the Pursuit of it, and order his Will & Affections aright. It is the Support and Comfort of Old Age; a Comfort that will not forsake us, but will increase as our Strength faileth, when we have no longer any Relish for worldly Enjoyments, and the Enchantment of Pleasure is at an End. But, above all, in that awful Hour, which tries the Strength & Worth of every Principle; when there is no Support in any other, (as they can give no Assurance, but that the Man and his Virtues must die together,) then will he find the religious Principle strong even in Death. It will open to him the near

Serm. L.

Prospect

Prospect of Heaven : it will dismiss his Soul with a sure and certain Hope, that he shall never die ; and that his Virtues will follow him into his everlasting Habitation. The Fear of God will introduce him into the Presence of God, where inconceivable Happiness will be the Reward of his Obedience, where Virtue is arrayed with Glory. Two lib. His. encl. 1800

This is, indeed, a Point so evident, that it will hardly admit of any Illustration, either as to the Effect of it, or Reward consequent upon it. Two lib. His. 1800

Sin, in the very Notion of it, is a Transgression of God's Law : and, it is certain, all wilful Transgression of God's Law must proceed, if not from a settled Disbelief of his Providence, at least from a present Disregard of the important Consequences of it. Accordingly, " My Heart sheweth me the Wickedness of the Ungodly ; (saith the Psalmist,) that there is no Fear of God before their Eyes." Into the Want of this Principle he gaily resolves all the Vices of which Men are guilty. — And, in Fact, where this Principle is wanting, no Sense of Honour, no Fear of Disgrace, no Dread of Punishment, will be a sufficient Security. But " the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul ; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth Wisdom to the simple." The Fear of God will preserve a Man's Innocence,

nothing, when nothing else can reach him. The Darkness is no Darkness, can promise no Concealment, & is, therefore, no Temptation, to that Man, who has always upon his Mind a prevailing Sense of his Presence, "to whom Darkness and Light are both alike." There is no Engagement so pressing as not to allow Time to ask this short Question: "How can I do this great Wickedness & Sin against God?" This Question, when properly attended to, must silence the most inviting Solicitation. The Enticements of Pleasure, and even the Dread of the most powerful human Resentment, every Allurement, that can address itself to that Part of our Nature in which we are most weakly guarded, will fall before it. And,

As a sincere Principle of Piety is a most powerful, so it is usually a most lasting, Preservative against Sin. Where a filial Awe of the Divine-Being, an hearty Desire of obeying and pleasing him, and a prevailing Fear of offending him, is deeply rooted in the Soul, such a Frame of Mind, notwithstanding the Depravity of our Nature, is seldom completely lost. Overpowered, indeed, it may be for a Time; but it generally, sooner or later, re-asserts its Dominion; and if in the mean while, it cannot restrain the Man from Sin, it however makes his Progress in it less easy and agreeable: and gives

Serm. L.

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the Overtures of divine Grace a more advantageous Influence upon the Mind. — Let Jereboam receive never so many awakening Intimations of God's Displeasure ; let "his Right-Hand be dried up," and let "the Son of his Bosom be cut-off in the Flower of his Age;" yet all this will be lost upon him ; for "after this Jereboam returned not from his evil Way," but persisted in his Impiety & Idolatry . But, Let David receive a seasonable Reprof from a Prophet , and he will immediately confess and lament his Offence, and "offer unto God the Sacrifice of a broken and contrite Heart."

The Cause of so remarkably different a Reception of the divine Chastisements was plainly this : David was, in the prevailing Part of his Character , a Man of Piety , One who had "the Law of his God in his Heart :" while Jereboam appears to have been an entire Stranger to "the Power of Godliness," and only for secular Purposes to have made-use of the Form of it. So true is the Observation of Solomon in this Sense also , [viz] the "just Man," (i.e) he who hath a right Principle , "falleth seven Times, and riseth again ; but the Wicked falleth into Mischief ;" because he falleth without Recovery.

These are the Advantages of the Principle before us. — The Motives inducing to it, besides the Benefit

selfe and Advantages of it, in holy Living; are,

(Firstly) The easie Command of God in the Case,
— God himselfe challengeth it from us: “ If I be a
Father, where is mine Honour? And, if I be a Master,
where is my Fear; saith the Lord of Hosts?” —
and “ Serve the Lord, therefore, with Fear, & rejoice
before him with Reverence.” — “ Fear God.”

Every one of the divine Perfections are proper
Arguments for this Reverence towards God: but,
the Attribute which most especially demands this
Affection from us, is, his Power, for none can re-
sist so interrupt the Execution of his Will. (a)

(A) The main Support of the Authority of human Laws, is, ge-
nerally speaking, the Power they are backed with, to punish the Vi-
olation of them. This is the ATLAS upon which all Society and Go-
vernment is sustained. And here, If the Apprehension of being call'd
to Account, and undergoing a temporal Punishment, be many Times
insufficient to keep wicked Men within the Bounds of their Duty, How
much more awful and tremendous must the Thoughts of that divine
Power be, which, in a Moment, can crush Sinners into nothing, or
rather into a State, infinitely worse than Annihilation? — It is upon
this Consideration, that our Saviour represents the greatest Power of
wicked Men, and the last Efforts of their Malice in this World, as rather
Master of generous Contempt, than Fear, “ Fear not them (says
he,) which kill the Body, and after that have no Power to do more,”
their Power, at the most, extending only to cut the Thread of a short
Life, which is every Moment running off space: “ But, Fear him,”
Let the Power of that great God strike you with the most awful and
awakening Apprehensions, “ Who is able to destroy both Body and
Soul in Hell.”

Serm. L.

Our Happiness and Misery, our Souls and Bodies, are in his Hands, and he has Power to live and to destroy, nor is he accountable to anyone for it. — If he be angry, unless his Wrath be appeased, he is ready to execute his Vengeance with an Eternity of Torments. — And tho; a just Confidence in his Goodness, should preserve us from a servile Distrust of his Power, or Despair of his Mercy; yet for an infinite, irresistible Authority cannot be reflected on, without the most awful Reverence, even by those, whose Peity assures them of his Favour. BURLA

Secondly, Another Motive to the Fear of God is taken from the divine Omniscience, — God's intimate Knowledge of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions.

This Consideration alone, if but duly attended to, should, (one would think,) be sufficient to put a Stop, not only to the external Actions, or Acts of Sin; but also to the very first Motions and Tendencies towards it. — Sin is so shameful in itself, and so much below the Dignity of human Nature, that all Persons, (except such, "as glorie in their Shame,") endeavour to keep their Sins as private as they can.

But, To what End are we so carefull to conceal our Vices, or even the least Indelicacies we are guilty of, from the Eyes of Men, when the Eye of God

is always upon us, when we can go no where from his Presence, & when all things are naked, and open before him? If the Presence of a Man like ourselves, or even of a Child, be sometimes sufficient to restrain us from a sinful or indecent Action: how much more careful ought we to be of our Behaviour before that holy and divine Majesty, who fills Heaven and Earth, and whose Notice nothing can escape?

Do we really consider what it is, to have the eternal God a constant Witness and Observer of all our Actions, and even of all our Thoughts and Intentions, and that he keeps a perfect Register of them, and enters them into those Books, which St. John tells us will be opened at the great Day of Accounts, and out of which we must all be judged? If we consider these things, and yet are not effectually restrained by them from sinning against God, there is but one Argument left which can be supposed to work upon our Fears, [viz.]

Thirdly, The Consideration of God's Justice.

The two former Attributes, the Power and Omnipotence of God, if He proceeded wholly by an arbitrary Will, in judging the World, and not upon the Reasons of Justice and Equity, would render

Serm. L.

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Him rather an Object of Terror, than of a filial, and religious Fear : But, when we are assured from express Revelation, that God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, & that an Eternity of Happiness or Misery depends on the Judgement he will then pronounce, according to the good or evil Actions of Men in this Life ; this is an irresistible Argument to excite us to the Practice of Piety, and to "Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling." *1st Cor. 15. 52.* Wicked Men, I am sensible, are apt to flatter themselves, because all things go smoothly on with them ~~HERE~~, with the Hopes that it will be well with them ~~HEREAFTER~~.

This is no more than what Solomon long since observed, — " Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil :" Whereas, the Inference ought to be the direct Reverse, that seeing God in this World, suffers Sinners to escape with Impunity ; therefore, there is another World, in which, for the Vindication of his Justice, he will call them to a strict and severer Account, for all their prospurious Sins and Impieties. Arguably, Solotorn makes the Consideration of a Judgement to come, the great Motive to excite us thus.

so an awful Fear of, & due Obedience to him : "Let us, (says he,) have the Conclusion of the whole Matter, "Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of Man;" & then adds in the next Words, (as a Reason to enforce all that he had said,) as the strongest Argument to the same End : for, "God will bring every Work into Judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The Goodness of God, his Holiness, and Mercy, are the immediate Objects of our Love ; yet, when we consider the Nature of these Qualities in God, that the Heavens are not pure in his Sight ; that he charges even his Angels with Folly ; This will teach us to bow our Souls with lowly Reverence before so excellent a Being, and adore his divine Perfections.

These Arguments will be yet more effectual, if we also reflect with a just Humility on Ourselves.

That we are indigent, defenceless Beings, the Creatures of his Power, the Dependants of his Providence ; whose Strength is Weakness, and whose Wisdom is but Folly. And what is yet worse, whose Power we have provoked by our Sins, and whose Goodness we have affronted, whose Laws we have despised, and against whose Authority we have rebelled. And if Prophets and Apostles with Reference

ence fell-down at the Feet of his Angels ; - if Moses, tho honour'd with the Character of God's Friend, was struck with exceeding Fear and Trembling at the Glory of his Perfections ; - if the holy Angels veil their Faces, and bow down before his Majesty ; with what Awe & Reverence should we sinful Dust and Ashes , approach that infinite Power which we have so highly offended ; and with what profound Humility implore his Pardon ?

To Conclude , The Benefit of this Principle is great, for this one Fear excludes all others. - " Fear God , and keep his Commandments ; for this is the Whole of Man." This will secure us both in Life and Death , and after it, when we shall stand most in need of Security , at the great & final Judgment-Day ; for the Man that is in no other Danger, than what he brings upon himself by fearing God , and obeying him, will by the Consideration of it , thro Life , more especially at the last Day of Retribution, be quickly freed from the Fear of all other things : He will be bold here, & from hence, at the Last-Day, he will be encouraged with good Hope and much humble Assurance : instead of Terror & Confusion, he will come, awed indeed, but not confounded, to the Tribunal of his Judge, and receive the Reward of the Just, - " Everlasting Happiness." " Fear

“ Fear the Lord, then, and depart from Evil ; it
“ shall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy
“ Bones : - for the Fear of the Lord is Honour, and
“ Glory, and Gladness, and a Crown of Rejoicing :
“ It giveth Joy, and Gladness, & Long Life. Whoso
“ feareth the Lord, it shall go well with him at the
“ last, and he shall find Favour in the Day of his
“ Death . - The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning
“ of Wisdom, - the Praise of it endureth forever. -
“ The Fear of the Lord is the Fulness of Wisdom,
“ making Peace and perfect Health to flourish : both
“ which are Gifts of God.”

“ If Thou desire Wisdom, therefore, keep the
“ Commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto
“ thee ; for the Fear of the Lord is Wisdom and In-
“ struction ; & Faith & Meekness are his Delight.”

“ Fear God, then, and keep his Commandments,
for this is the Whole of Man.” — Indeed,

In the present State of our Infirmitie, the Soul, I am afraid, can hardly arrive to that just Temperament of Affection, with which Man, in his Innocence, adored his Maker. Our imperfect Conceptions of the Deity, and the frequent Failings and Offences to which the best of us are conscious, will debase the Honour we pay him, with some Alloys of a servile Mixture.. The proper and adequate Reverence from the Soul to God, is perhaps reserved for the Perfection of that State, when we shall see him as he is in the full Beauty of his Goodness, no longer armed with the Terror of our Judge, nor offend with our Transgressions, but appeased, for-
gonaled, and united to us thro Christ.
Let it be our Care, therefore, in the mean Time, to search in him, that we may behold him without Dread and Afflition hereafter. That when we
shall be called to the Final Judgment of our Lord,

rence fell-down at the Feet of his Angels ; - if Moses, tho honour'd with the Character of God's Friend, was struck with exceeding Fear and Trembling at the Glory of his Perfections ; - if the holy Angels veil their Faces, and bow down before his Majesty ; with what Awe & Reverence should we sinful Dust and Ashes , approach that infinite Power which we have so highly offended ; and with what profound Humility implore his Pardon ?

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“ Death . - The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning
“ of Wisdom, - the Praise of it endureth forever. -
“ The Fear of the Lord is the Fulness of Wisdom ,
“ making Peace and perfect Health to flourish : both
“ which are Gifts of God.”

“ If Thou desire Wisdom , therefore , keep the
“ Commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto
shall be called to the awful Tribunal of our Judge ,
when the Sinner shall desire the Mountains to fall
on him , & the Hills to cover him from the Terrors
of his Presence , we may be able to approach the
Throne of his Majesty with the Confidence of Sons ,
and be received among the redeemed of the Lord
into that eternal State of Happiness , where all our
Fears and Labours will cease , where everlasting
Love shall be our Employment , and everlasting
Peace our Reward.

SERMON LI.

On Trust in God.

Isaiah. xxvi. 4. "Trust ye in the Lord forever."

As all the Creatures derive their Being , & whatever Degree of Power , Perfection , and Happiness they possels , from the Goodness of God , (the sole Principle which, we can conceive, could determine him, infinitely perfect & self-sufficient, to create any thing;) so the Continuance of their Being , and every Degree of created Power , Perfection & Happiness, depends solely on his good Pleasure. For it is impossible that such an Effect should not depend absolutely on the Cause ; that any thing which exists merely by the Will of another , should not exist just so long as, and cease to exist whenever that other, pleases ; and that all the Circumstances of its Condition, ordered by his Free-Appointment, should not be always subject to his Disposal. The rational Creatures whom God has indued with a Capacity of discerning this , will find , that as , when they seriously and deliberately attend to it , the Affection of Gratitude

Gratitude will naturally arise in their Minds for the Favours they have received, so with Respect to Futurety, (to which they cannot help looking with an earnest and solicitous Expectation,) they have no solid Ground of inward Tranquillity and Hope, but in an affectionate Reliance on the same immutable divine Bounty, to which they owe their Being and all the Good already in their Possession. This then, as well as Love & Fear is an eminent Branch of that natural Homage which intelligent Creatures owe to the Deity, who find ourselves in an imperfect and indigent State, having Weaknesses in every Part of our Constitution; whose All is in God's Hands, & on his Pleasure; who have so little in actual Possession, and so much in Prospect, that Trust and Reliance on God, becomes a most important Part of our Christian Duty, as well as the only sure Foundation of inward Peace & Security of Mind. Accordingly,

There are no Sentiments towards God, which the inspired Writers seem more solicitous to encourage in the Mind of Man, than those of an habitual Trust and Confidence in the Providence of God, expressed on all proper Occasions, in Suitable Acknowledgements, or Acts of Devotion towards him. And, Considering the indigent Condition of our Nature and the Shortness of our Days, there cannot, surely, be

be a Privilege more to be desired by us, than that of a ready Access to a Being of infinite Wisdom, and Power, & Goodness, for the Direction of our Paths, and the Supply of all our Wants; and yet, it is to be feared, there is not any Privilege more frequently slighted by us, than this.

Weak and shortsighted as we are, we affect to be independent of any superior Aid or Information in our worldly Pursuits; in the eager Prosecution of our various Schemes we neglect to apply to him, who alone can enable us to conduct them with Safety and Success; & if, at any Time, he is pleased, notwithstanding, to permit them for a while to prosper, we then begin immediately to applaud our own Fore-Sight and Activity, "sacrificing, (as the Prophet speaks,) to our own Net, and burning Incense to our own Dragg, as if by them, and them only, our Portion were fat, & our Mear plentious."

A Proceeding this, not only undutiful and injurious to Almighty God, but also highly prejudicial to our real Interests; for, "after all, the Lord is King, be we ever so impatient, or unmindful of him".

With a View, then, to this prevailing, but fatal Error in the Conduct of human Life, and in Order to prevent Men, (as far as may be,) from falling into it, - and let it be comfortable an Invitation, whilst

as guards against the fatal Extremes of Self-Sufficiency and Impiety, should be misapplied to the no less pernicious Purposes of Slothfulness or Extravagance. I shall endeavour,

FIRST, To explain the Nature of this Truth, or Confidence in God, here so commended to us; by shewing the true Principles on which it rests. &c.

II. The Considerations proper to strengthen and confirm it. And,

First, To trust in the Lord, must be, (it is prefigured,) instead of confiding totally or principally in our own Wisdom or Abilities; to put ourselves under the Direction of his Laws and the Guardianship of his Providence, without importation of W

First, a right Understanding of the things which God hath promised, and what we may expect from him.

Secondly, A careful Use of all such Means as God hath put within our Power.

Thirdly, A steady Resolution to reject all Expedients disagreeable to his Will; and,

LASTLY, A dutiful Acquiescence in all his Dispensations, alike prepared to trust his Wisdom in the Delay

Serm. L.I.

Delay or Denial of our Requests, as to acknowledge His Bounty in the more liberal and direct Grant of them.

These Particulars, (as they may afford Matter of useful Instruction, and at the same Time, explain the Duty before us,) shall here somewhat enlarge on: And,

First; That our Reliance may be rational, we should set ourselves to know what it is, that God hath promised, and what we may expect from him.

From the Gospel, we may learn that no absolute Promise is made to us, of Length of Days, of Health or Wealth, of Friends or Reputation.

We must not, therefore, expect that God, upon our Trust and Reliance upon him, will infallibly insure these things to us; or indeed, any other Particular, that we may imagine a Blessing; there being several things which we think to be Blessings, that are not so upon the Whole, or not to Us. And Providence is not like an over-indulgent Parent, who destroys the FUTURE Happiness of his Children, by complying with their importunate Petitions, and removing their PRESENT Uneasiness.

We must distinguish, likewise, between NATURAL and FANTASTICAL WANTS; Providence has general

made ample Provision for the former, but not for the latter. Besides those Desires, which are IN-BORN, there are several, which are IN-BRED in us, by early Custom, and by a Neglect of Reason: Such are those of high and sumptuous Food, of Honour and all the "Pride of Life." Now, every irregular Inclination, "every Plant, which our heavenly Father hath planted," he will take Care, in Concurrence with our own Endeavours, to feed and nourish. But we ourselves, if we will not part with them, must maintain those spurious and illegitimate Desires, which we have begot in ourselves. (A)

Nor must we, farther, hope, that Providence will prevent every Calamity, that may befall good Men. All, that the Assertors of a particular Providence contend-for, is, that, if he does not think-fit to prevent it, he will either support them under it, or rescue them from it; or make all Things, at the last Winding-up of the Whole, "work together for Good."

(A) There would be as exact Adjustment of the Means of Subsistence to the respective Wants of the rational Creation, as there is to those of the animal World, if Men unsatisfied with the Necessaries and Conveniences, had not made Life miserable by acquired Uneasiness and Cravings. We are now in a World, in some Measure, of our own modelling, instead of having it, as it came originally from God: We have introduced much Misery and Disorder by Luxury, Pride, Ambition, and unnatural Desires.

Serm. LL.

Good to them, who love him." — To annex worldly Happiness constantly and universally to Virtue, & worldly Misery to Vice, would lay too great a Bias and Restraint upon our Inclinations ; it would overrule the Will, & necessitate it to be virtuous. This Life would be no State of Probation and Trial : There would be no Temptation to Vice, when all the Advantages lay on the Side of Virtue.

What we may expect, therefore, from our heavenly Father, is, that we shall probably receive a Competency of the Necessaries of Life, & a Heart, capable of enjoying them ; that we shall certainly obtain what, (upon the whole,) is most convenient for us, and conducive to our true Happiness ; that if Disappointments, Distresses, or Calamities of any Kind beset us, we shall be endued with Strength of Mind, sufficient to support, if not overcome them, if we are not wanting to ourselves in any of these things ; and, that if our Measure of worldly Blessings fall short in some Respects, it shall be abundantly made-up to us in another, and better Way, if we patiently abide it.

He, therefore, who will trust in God, must set his Heart upon no particular present Advantage, but leave that entirely to his heavenly Father, as to the only proper Judge, & acquiesce in his sacred Will ;

and,

and, if he is satisfied, he hath his Reward; for he who is contented, cannot be unhappy. But,

Secondly, To "trust in God" further implies a diligent Use of all the Means that are in our Power.

If God hath bestowed upon us Health & Strength, and natural Abilities, it is that we should make a proper Use of them. — By giving us the Means to provide for ourselves, he hath, (in Effect,) given us a Provision; nor will he work Miracles in Favour of Indolence. (A)

In vain, therefore, (for Instance,) shall we, with the pious Psalmist, beseech God to "open our Eyes that we may see the wondrous things of his Law;" unless we can with him too, "all the Day-long is my Study in it."

If, in the sublime Language of the Evangelical Prophet, we "call upon the Heavens to drop-down from above; and upon the Skies, to pour-down Righteousness;" — If we expect "the Earth to open, and bring-forth Salvation;" we must ourselves, like wise Husbandmen, "prepare the Ground, — we must

(A) Frugality and Industry are the Hands of Fortune.

Natura Noster est, Aetate Prudentia.

See No. 225 of the Spectator.

Serm. LI.

cast in the principal Wheat, & the appointed Barley and Rye in their Places;" (i.e.) according to Hosea, " We must break-up our Fallow-Ground , and sow to ourselves in Righteousness, if ever we hope to reap in Mercy."

As Faith without Works of Goodness, will carry no Man to Heaven; so neither will Faith, (i.e.) Trust in God, without Works of Industry, carry us thro this World, with any Credit & Satisfaction.

If we look abroad into the World, & take a Survey of human Conduct in general, we shall find that a great many are reduced to Want thro their own Imprudence, Irregularity and Neglect . Instead of tracing Effects from their proper Causes, and taking Blame on themselves , as they ought , they are too apt to murmur & repine, & " charge God foolishly."

A provident Care for future Welfare, hath ever been esteemed one of the first & most distinguishing Marks of human Wisdom . Joseph shewed his Sagacity in nothing more, than in the discreet Advice he gave to Pharaoh, to lay-up in the seven Years of Plenty, for the seven ensuing Years of Famine. And it was this economical Counsel of his, that so immediately struck the King : — " Where , (says he,) shall we find such a One as this ? A Man in whom is the Spirit of God."

The

The Ant, (that seemingly insignificant Insect,) is recommended to our Consideration both by the sacred and prophætic Writers, as a Pattern worthy of our Imitation, for his provident Forecast.

Even the Fowls of the Air, which by our Saviour are said to be fed by our heavenly Father, yet take Pains to gather their Provision, and by being Examples to us of Industry in their Way, teach us that Providence will do nothing for the Sluggard.

Even the Apostles, to whom our Lord's well-known Admonition against Thoughtlessness was evidently, if not peculiarly addressed, had the Wisdom of the Serpent, in Conjunction with the Harmlessness of the Dove, recommended to them by the same Authority.

The Events of this Life are fluctuating and precarious : ought not, then, some Provision to be made for unforeseen Necessities ? ought we not to extend our Views further than the Supply of our present Wants ? Ought we not to lay-up something for Futurity ?

To look no further than the present Moment ; to live at Random, secure and careless of any future Exigencies ; to concern ourselves about nothing but what is immediately before us ; and in the Enjoyment of To-Day, to "take no Thought for the

Szem. L. I. "two dayes to morrow." Morrow".

"Morrow" must inevitably be productive of the most fatal Consequences, not only to Ourselves, but to Posterity also. It entails Misery upon "Children yet unborn."

In what lively Colours doth the Wise-Man paint this too-common Error! "He Begetteth a Son, and lo! there is nothing in his Hand." And St. Paul himself avers, that "he hath sunk even below Infidelity itself, who is negligent to provide for those of his own House."

While, therefore, we guard against an anxious Sollicitude, (an Imputation very unbecoming a Christian,) we affirm that to look forward to the Consequences, to the Issue and Event of things, (as far as we are able,) is what Reason naturally suggests (A), Scripture warrants, and Religion itself enjoins; is what a wise Man must approve of, and what a good Man cannot condemn.

Is not this the most natural Use of that noble Faculty by which we are distinguished from every other Part of the Creation? It is by this, that we are enabled to determine what is best for us to do, and to weigh the Consequence before we form a Resolution.

It was this provident Fore-Cast in the Steward, (t) Notwithstanding all our Warnings by the daily Examples of Troubles and Losses, which Life forces upon our Observations, yet such is our Depravity, Hopes of future Felicity, or Unwillingness to foresee what we dread, that most Troubles come suddenly upon us, and either crush us as a Blow, or press us as a Burden.

which attracted the Admiration of his Lord, (for so much those Words be understood, "and the Lord commended the unjust Steward :") - The sagacious Discernment which he shewed for his future Support, (had he used justifiable Means,) was doubtless laudable. In Truth,

A discreet and provident Fore-Cast is absolutely necessary in human Conduct, to enable us to steer our Course thro Life with Ease and Satisfaction; is not only requisite to our temporal Interests, but is, in itself, an indispensable Duty, consonant to the first Principle implanted in human Nature. (A)

The Truth is, we are to cast all our Care of Events upon God, but not so, as to become careless of the Means, or the less sober and vigilant ourselves. (B)

To

(A). "Self-Preservation is the first Law of Nature."

(B) The Immutability of the divine Councils does not destroy all Free-Agency in inferior Beings, nor the proper Use of their Powers in Order to accomplish the Ends for which they were appointed. No Man reasons after this Manner, that because the Issues of things are under the Dominion of Providence, therefore, we need not to do anything ourselves, but abide the Event of an irreversable Decree; - Because the Fertility of the Earth depends on the Will of the supreme Cause, therefore we need not use any Labour, that it may yield its Increase; - Because there is an appointed Time for Man upon Earth, and our Days are determined, therefore all Means and Care, on our Part, for Health and the Preservation of our Life, are unnecessary.

The Wisdom of God governs the Creatures according to the several
Serm. III. 33. q. III. 307 332 (A)

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Serm. III. seq. (A)

To neglect our own Part in any Undertaking, on a Presumption that God's Providence will accomplish the Whole for us, were to suppose him a Patron of Sloth, and by no Means a Rewarder of Industry; and whoever thus trusts in God, will be sure to affront him: for the Commandment is, "Put thy Trust in the Lord, & be doing Good." If, therefore, we are wanting in our own Part, we resist the Commandment of the Most High. (A)

What stronger Instance of Improvidence can we have than in those five Virgins, who "took no Oil in their Vessels" to supply their Lamps; - or with that in the Person, who raised up his Friend at Midnight to borrow of him, having a Guest come, but nothing

veral Powers and Capacities he has given them. — God is willing to make us happy; but to our Enjoyment of Happiness, moral Qualifications in us are required; and for the Want of them, Men are unavoidably unhappy. — God's Superintendence does not discharge our Subserviency.

To be always praying, therefore, and doing nothing, will, in no Way, profit us. If we expect God's Grace & Assistance, we must work out our Salvation, as well as pray for it.

————— *Ignavis Precibus Fortuna repugnat.*

Industry is the Method by which God hath thought fit to give us our Sustenance; and therefore, by which we ought to seek it. We have no Title to it any other Way: - And not only so; but by Diligence and Frugality, lay-up something, if possible, for future Exigencies also.

(A) See Vol. III. page 522.

to let before him? With many Others, from that
Time to this our Day; who, by adopting the Maxims
of the Poet, (A) think no other than that to "Morn
now shall be as this Day, and much more abundant,"
have so embarrassed their Circumstances, that they
are ever in Straits and Difficulties, ever struggling
with Want, and ever under the Pressure of Necessi-
ty. In Truth, ~~when oldsaugU~~ . Judged ~~is~~
No Enterprise, at least no important Scene, what-
ever, ought to be undertaken without first revolv-
ing it in our Minds, without weighing our Abi-
ties previous to the Execution, & without sitting
down first to compute the Cost." ~~disgord on this~~
Upon the Whole of this Argument, We must not
expect, that God's particular Providence will inter-
pose, where our own Endeavours are sufficient, for
that, (as we have seen,) would be to encourage Sloth
and Idleness, instead of countenancing and suppor-
ting Virtue. Nor ought we to expect to be reliev'd
from Difficulties and Distresses, into which our own
Mismanagement & criminal Conduct have brought
us. But,
When without any Fault of ours, our Affairs are
so perplexed and intangled, that human Assistance

which is hard to say, seeing until now (L.) will

(A) *Dona prestantis rapi, latu, Hora,*
Rapid sit futurum Cras, fuge quares.

Serm. Ll.

wilt be of no Avail; then we must have Recourse to God, that he would give us Wisdom to conduct us thro' all the Labyrinths and Intricacies of Life, Resolution to grapple with Difficulties & Strength to overcome them (a). In this Light the Prayer, which Josephus puts into the Mouth of Moses just before his Passage through the Red Sea, is very just & beautiful. Unpassable Rocks barred his Escape one Way, the numerous Hosts of the Egyptians blocked up others: Before him stood the Red Sea. In this Situation Moses just upon the Brink of Ruin applies himself thus to God: "Lord, thou knowest that no Strength, Wisdom or Contrivance of ours can here be of any Significancy. It is in thy Power alone to find out a Way for the Deliverance of this People, who by thy Command and under thy Conduct have left Egypt. Despairing of all other Ways, we flee to thee alone for Succour: Lord, let it come speedily; give us a full Proof of thy Almighty Power & Veracity. We are in great Straits, great and unsurmountable by us; but go Thee right and inconsiderable. The Sea is thine, and it obstructs our Progress: The Mountains that shut us up, are thine namid eadibz gatui bus bexelqyng

*(A) Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus Vindice Nodus
Incideret.*

Never presume to make a God appear,
But for a Business worthy of a God.

chine too. Thou canst divide this Sea, or turn its Waves into firm Land, or make us find a safe Passage thro' the Deep." — *Job.* — *These was a Knot too hard for any but the Deity to resolve : and therefore the Deity himself descended to unravel it.* But, *and qibogn has bulow* — In common Cases, the best Way is to rely upon Providence, as if all human Endeavours and Resources were useless, (as indeed they are without it;) & yet so exert ourselves as if Providence would not interpose at all. For God will not profligate his Power to supersede our Endeavours, as to what we can do; He will only supply what we cannot do.

But further, If to depend upon God's Favour whilst we are doing nothing for ourselves, cannot but be displeasing to him ; how much more provoking must it needs be, to hope for his Blessing upon the Violation of his Laws, or on things that are in themselves unreasonable. (A)

This, indeed, is so glaring an Absurdity, that it might reasonably be thought hardly possible to be fallen into, or necessary to be guarded against, had not Experience, (to our Confusion,) confirmed it.

(A) There is no forcing Nature against her Blis, nor inverting the Methods of Providence: Extravagant Desires and unreasonable Undertakings must expect to meet with Disappointment.

This is such a Dependance on God, as his holy Word gives no Encouragement for, but the Reverse. — God's Protection & Blessing are annexed to Obedience : They, therefore, who will not serve him, must not presume to trust in him ; for to the wicked and ungodly he is a declared Enemy.

In the Government of his reasonable Creatures, God has a Regard to their moral Dispositions & Behaviour ; & there is, by his Appointment, a certain establish'd Connexion between Happiness & Virtue. He is a Lover of Rectitude, and hates Vice ; a perfectly holy Being himself, free from every Kind and Degree of moral Evil ; "a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, just & right is he ;" and consequently approves Righteousness & Goodness wherever it is found, but Wickedness is an Abomination to him.

Our Confidence in God, therefore, ought always to be directed by a Regard to his Character, as the wise moral Governor of the World, and therefore implies a Conformity to his Laws ; we may entertain high Expectations from his Goodness, and rely upon his Favour, only on the Account of the sincere and faithful Performance of our Duty, and imitating his Holiness. Since, by the established Rules of his Administration, the Happiness of moral Agents is inseparably connected with Virtue, what reasonable

reasonable Prospect can there be of the former, without the Testimony of our own Conscience countering our Sincerity in the other? — The sacred Writers (agreeable to the first Principles of natural Religion,) thus limit our Trust in God. — They represent it as having a necessary Connexion with doing-good; they exhort, "them that fear the Lord to trust in him; for he is their Help and Shield;" and "him that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, although he walk in Darkness and hath no Light, yet to trust in the Name of the Lord, and to stay upon his God." The deepest Distress, and most disconsolate Concurrence of afflicting Circumstances ought not to weaken our Confidence in the divine Mercy, (provided always that our Minds be supported by an inward Consciousness of Integrity;) - But when the Heates of Men reproach them for their Crimes, & they have the galling Remembrance of Guilt unrepented of, this naturally produces Distrust. In this Case to expect the Approbation of God, and such Favour as he shews to his sincere Servants, is presumptuously to affront the Judge of the whole Earth, as supposing him not to do right; that he is a Party to the Wickedness of his Creatures, and will indulge them in it.

Serm. L.I.

Not

Not that this is to be understood in so strict a Sense, as if a Conscientious of the least moral Imperfection destroyed our Hopes in God; for, if he entered into Judgment with his Servants, & strictly marked all their Failures, no Man living could be justified in his Sight. But, when our Hearts do not condemn us for wilfully indulging ourselves in any evil Way, or for any deliberate Transgression of God's Law, unrepented of; and unreformed; or for committing Sin, so as to be the Servants of Sin; but, on the contrary, witness an habitual Sincerity of Intention and Integrity of Life in us, tho' not without some Defects in the Performance of our Duty, and some InfirmitieS, (which, strictly speaking, may be called sinful; but not to be wholly avoided by any Mortal in this imperfect State;) and we are always watching against them, and endeavouring to amend them; Then we have Confidence towards God, believing that, as the righteous and good Judge, he will make a Difference between such a Character, and impenitent Workers of Iniquity, of which Christianity gives us a full and express Assurance.

When, therefore, in Prospect of some Good, whether natural or moral, we break the Rules prescrib'd us, we withdraw from the Direction of Superior Wisdom

Wisdom, & take all Consequences upon ourselves,
Man cannot so far know the Connection of Causes
and their Events, as that he may venture to do
Wrong, in Order to his Good. When we pursue
our End by lawful Means, we may always console
our Miscarriage by the Hope of future Recompence.
But When we consult only our own Policy, & at-
tempt to find a nearer Way to Good, by over-leap-
ing the settled Boundaries of Right and Wrong, we
cannot be happy even by Success, because we can-
not escape the Consciousness of our Fault; but, if we
miscarry the Disappointment is irremediably im-
bittered. How comfortless is the Sorrow of him,
who feels at once the Pangs of Guilt, and the Vex-
ation of Calamity, which that Guilt has brought
upon him?

This, at least, is the present Reward of all vir-
tuous Conduct, that no unlucky Consequence can
oblige us to repent of it.

Let the Ground of all our Religion, therefore, be
Obedience; for, when we act according to our Duty,
we commit the Event to him by whose Laws all our
Actions are governed, and who will not suffer his
faithful Servants to fail.

In all our Undertakings, therefore, especially in
Matters of Consequence, before we presume to re-

Serm. Ll.

commend

commend ourselves to the Almighty; let us assure our Hearts before him: for, to implore the Favour of God, or recommend ourselves to him in Iniquity, can never be acceptable, or well-pleasing to an Almighty God, the righteous Judge of all the Earth.

Lastly, The Temper here recommended implies not only a firm Reliance on God's Providence at the Time of our presenting our Addresses to him, and an hearty co-operating with it; but also an undeviating Acquiescence in his Disposal afterwards: - As it excludes every previous Distrust, so it allays every subsequent Murmur and Complaint.

We are "not to faint, neither be weary in well-doing;" for, far from desponding upon every Disappointment, or Delay of a favourable Answer, and striking out of the strait Road of our Duty into any crooked Paths, we are to persevere therein, and "trust him at all Times." (A)

Holy David had his Distresses and Dejections of Mind

(A) Non, si male sunt, et, semper sic erit.
Patience and Time run thro' the roughest Day.

Many Persons, greatly unhappy, may live to see many happy Days, if they will not heighten unavoidable Accidents into guilty Despondency. — *Dum Spiro, Spero.* — *Semel in Anno videt Apollo.*

Every Man has it in his own Power, by the Force of natural Reason, to master the Temptation of falling either into Presumption or Despair.

Mind like other Men, under which we find him more than once crying out, " Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" — But, did he utterly faint, or fly to easy understandabla Expedients? — No; his sure Trust was in the Goodness of God, and having often experienced the Sufficiency of that Support, he was always willing to " tarry the Lord's Leisure" for a happy Deliverance out of all his Troubles, and the seasonable Accomplishment of all his Desires.

There is something, (if possible,) yet more glorious in the ever-memorable Declaration of the Prophet Habakkuk: — " Altho the Fig-Tree shall not blossom; neither shall Fruit be found in the Vine; tho the Labourer of the Olive shall fail, and the Field yield no Increase; — tho the Flock shall be cut-off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stall; — yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my Salvation."

A Degree of Resignation this, devoutly to be aspired-to, tho with Difficulty to be attained by every good Man, under the like Trials. Indeed,

Should any of us find Cause to complain in the Words of holy Job, " Behold, I go forward, but he is not there — and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the Left-Hand where he doth work; but

Serm. L.I.

I

I cannot behold him; - he hideth himself on the Right-Hand that I cannot see him;" yet still we should be ready to say, after the same Pattern, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Upon the Whole, We must so trust in God, as to make our own sincere Endeavour - to endeavour, as neither to neglect nor forfeit his Favour; then shall either the Thing we will for, or something still better, in due Season, be given unto us.

Sermon

Upon the Whole, We must so trust in God, as to make our own sincere Endeavour - to endeavour, as neither to neglect nor forfeit his Favour; then shall either the Thing we will for, or something still better, in due Season, be given unto us.

A Dialogue of Repentance this, devoutly to be recited before the Lord, who with Dilicency to be received by us, under the like Title. Indeed,

Good Man, under the like Title. Indeed, speedily and easily to us bring Comfort to our souls in this World of pain, "Repent, I do command," said the Lord of grace - had peradvised, but I cannot conceive if ever there was any more, but said: on the last bush made of thorn more, but

Second. II.

and, as plain as it is, that we must have
an knowledge of his Providence for our Con-

SERMON LII.

On the same Subject.

Matt. xxvi. 4. "Trust ye in the Lord forever."

The Considerations inducing to a firm Trust and Reliance on God, are chiefly three, to which I shall, at present, confine myself, as they impart a firm Belief,

I. of the Wisdom of God in all his providential Dispensations towards us;

II. of his Goodness in them. And,

III. of his Power to effect whatever either his Wisdom or Goodness may design.

To trust in any Person or intelligent Agent, is to expect Good from his Benevolence or Kind-Affection. In Order to which, there must not only be a Persuasion of his good Dispositions, but of his Power as superior to ours, at least, as sufficient for effecting something to our Advantage, which we could not effect without him, and of his Knowledge and Wisdom extending to the Affairs wherein we trust

trust him. The least Attention will satisfy us, that the Knowledge of all these Qualifications in the Agent, is necessary to lay a Foundation for our Confidence. — If a Person in Power, is ill-disposed towards us, we dread him in Proportion to the Apprehensions we have of his Power; — if he is indifferent, there may be Fear, but very little Hope; — if we are secure of his Good-Will, but believe him to be weak or ignorant, this may give some Pleasure, yet no Expectation of Advantage; but Kindness in Conjunction with Ability and Wisdom, make the complete Character which is the Object of Confidence. — Now, all these Properties belong to the Deity in an infinite Degree of Perfection. As with the "Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength," a Power extending to the utmost Bounds of Possibility, to do in Heaven and Earth whatever pleases him; and unlimited Knowledge comprehending all things, with all their Circumstances & Relations, with all future Events; so "he is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works." — That Variety of Happiness which there is in the World, and can be attributed to no other Cause than his good Pleasure, abundantly prove this. — Man, (considered in himself,) is helpless, and beset with Dangers on all Sides, and may become unhappy

py by numberless Accidents, which he could not fore-see; nor have prevented; had he fore-seen them, & aid and ad-vised otherwise. A. It is our Comfort, therefore, whilst we are ob-ses-tious to so many Accidents, that we are under the Care of One, who directs Contingencies, and has in his Hands the Management of every thing that is capable of annoying, or offending us; who knows the Assistan-ces we stand in need of, and is always ready to assist those who ask him.

To make our Lives, therefore, easy to us, we are com-manded to put our Trust in him who is thus able to relieve & succour us: The divine Goodness having made such a Reliance, a Duty; — And miserable should we have been, had it been for-bid-den us.

Among the several Motives which might be made use of, to recommend this Duty to us, I shall only take-notice of the two following.

The first and strongest, is, that we are promised, he will not fail those who put their Trust in him.

But, Without considering the supernatural Bless-ing which accom-pa-nies this Duty, we may ob-serve that it has a natural Tendency to its own Reward, or, (in other Words,) this firm Trust & Confidence in the great Disposer of all things, contributes very

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much

much to the getting clear of any Affliction, or to the bearing it manfully.

A Person, who believes he has his Succour at Hand, & that he acts in the Sight of his Friend, often exerts himself beyond his Abilities, and does Wonders that are not to be equalled by him who is not animated with such Confidence of Success. (A) Instances could be produced from History, both sacred & profane, ancient & modern, of some, who, out of a Belief that they were under the Protection of some invisible Assistant, have acted beyond what they would have done, had they not been inspired by such a Belief. I might, in the same Manner shew, how such a Trust in the Assistance of the Almighty, naturally produces Patience, Hope, Cheerfulness, with all other Dispositions of Mind, that alleviate those Calamities, which we are not able to remove. When our Affairs are in the Hands of Persons who are of known Ability and Experience, we promise ourselves a good Account of them from their Management, and are less solicitous about any cross Accident or Difficulty that may happen; and yet, the wisest of Men, (could we be secure of their not deceiving us,) may be deceived themselves. A great many unexpected Casualties may start up in

(A) See Vol. II. page 45.

the Way, which they could not foresee, and cannot prevent; and which may so puzzle & confound their Measures, that, with all their Address and Dexterity they cannot bring their Designs to bear. And, or

For this Reason, (who is fit that we should act always upon the most prudent Measures, yet,) we ought not to rely on our own Prudence, but refer the Disposition of our Affairs to the wise Providence of God, according to that Precept of the Wise-Man "Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Understanding;" - and when we have done this, we are patiently to wait in God's due Time, for a happy Issue and Event of things; who hath promised that if "in all our Ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our Paths," - if we "commit our Ways to him, he will surely bring it to pass." For,

It is God alone who perfectly knows the Power and Progress of Second Causes, and the Effects they will produce; for "Wisdom," (i.e.) the Wisdom of God, (as saith Solomon,) "reacheth from one End to the other mightily, and sweetly ordereth all things;" Whereas our Prospect of things goes no further than the first Cause, and moreover we are often deceived in judging of its immediate Effects.

This continued Train of Events, being known

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only

only to God, he often effects the Ends of his Providence by Means, which appear, in the Eye of human Reason, unaccountable; He seems, sometimes, to go-about in the Execution of his Designs, as he did in leading the Children of Israel thro the Wilderness, when there was a nearer and shorter Way to the Promised-Land: — But, God himself gives us the Reasons why he suffered that People to wander so long "in the Wilderness; [viz] "that he might humble them, & that he might prove them, and, from their Humiliation, and the Trial of their Faith, take Occasion to do them the greater Good at their latter End." — At other Times, God makes-use of Means, which seem directly to cross and oppose his Designs. Who, (for Instance,) would have thought, that Joseph should have taken the first Steps of his Advancement above his Brethren, and to the highest Post in the Government in Egypt, from the Condition of a Slave? — The various Turns of his Fortune, and the Means of his Rise, from the Beginning of his Slavery in Egypt, were very intricate and surprizing; But, God meant them all to him for Good; - and, in the End, his Design is unravelled in so wonderful a Manner, that the beautiful Scheme of his Conduct appears in a Manner worthy of him. — I might observe the same

wonderful

wonderful and wise Dispensations of God's Providence with Respect to the Advancement of Mordacai, and the Deliverance of the Jewish People in his Time, by improving even the Designs of their Enemies against them, to a quite contrary End, than what they were designed to produce.

"These Things were written for our Instruction, and are left to us for Examples, that we, thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope and not despond upon every Appearance of Difficulty before us; but that when the Circumstances of our Affairs appear most dark and disconsolate, we should look-up to God, the wise Director and Disposer of all Events, who 'to the Upright causeth the Light to arise out of Darkness,' by Means which they cannot see, and which are sometimes directly contrary to all the Expectations founded on the Maxims of worldly Wisdom and Policy.

The wilest of Men are often deceived in the Choice of those things which appear most desirable to them; - They see them in all their Advantages, and magnify them; but, they do not see, nor consider the long Train of Consequences, which they draw after them; & which are often attended with great Calamities. - We should, therefore, refer all Events to the Wisdom of divine Providence,

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-and Acquiesce in its Dispensations, seeing that it is he alone who knows the Power and Connection of all Causes, and the Circumstances of every possible Event, and that his Wisdom, in the Order and Disposition of them, is equal to his Knowledge. But,

II. A Second Motive to our Trust in God, is, the Consideration of his Goodness, which is over all his Works.

Tho the Providence of God, (as we have shewn) wisely orders all things, and always applies the fittest Means to produce the Ends he designs; yet, that which gives us the greatest Ease and Assurance of Mind, under all Events, is, that glorious and essential Attribute, whereby he is inclined to procure and promote the Happiness of all his Creatures.

It was the Goodness of God, that first moved him to create the World, and to communicate that Happiness to his Creatures, which he could not increase to himself, and the same Goodness still presides over all the Acts of his Providence. "He is good, and does good;" all his Actions bear the Character of his Attributes, and above all his Attributes he seems, in the holy Scriptures, to exalt that of his Goodness. So that, were it not revealed

vealed to us, yet it is a Maxim that flows from the Necessity of the Divine Nature, that "God does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the Children of Men;" but that in all the severest Dispensations of his Providence he has good and gracious Ends to answer.

(A) "designedly and wisely ni

This is the great Foundation of our Hope and Trust in him, and is sufficient to dispel every desponding Thought; for, did not our Reasonings concerning this divine Attribute convince us of it; yet the Scriptures do every where testify and confirm it.

The Words of the Apostle to the Romans are full to this Purpose. "We know," (says he,) - He speaks with an Assurance and Certainty that excludes all Doubt, — "that all things work-together for Good, to them that love God;" (i.e.) God has wise & good Reasons, tho' perhaps unknown to us, in the severest Dispensations of his Providence towards us, & which in the Conclusion we may be able to discover Ourselves. — It is sufficient, at present, if we know, in general, that the Severities which God exercises over us are designed for the Trial of our Faith, and other Christian Graces, whilst possibly our Tempers and Dispositions will not admit of other, or gentler Methods.

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Afflictions, therefore, are so far from being an Argument of God's Hatred to us, that they are, contrary-wise, the proper Signs of our Adoption, and of God's paternal Love towards us, "for whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a Father the Son, in whom he delighteth." (A) If

(A) The Goodness of God extending to all his Creatures, & being so exercised towards every one, as not to neglect any, the whole System is, at once, the Object of his Care, which comprehending a vast Variety of Individuals, the Good of many, and indeed of the Whole, may be attended with particular Inconveniences to some. This, we know, is really the Case of human Governments, the End of which being the Benefit of entire Societies put under their Care, & of every single Subject so far only as is consistent with that, they necessarily and laudably pursue the Measures which tend to the common Safety, tho' the interfering Interests of a few may suffer by them.

Who would reproach a Prince for destroying the Properties or the Lives of a few Subjects, (suppose Rebels or Traitors,) when the Interest of the whole Kingdom indispensably requires it? This is so far from being any just Ground of impeaching his Goodness, that Goodness itself, directed by Wisdom, is the very Motive to it. and even

From this low and imperfect Image we may take our Rise to the Consideration of the divine universal Government, the true Character of which is Supreme Goodness; which being conducted by the most perfect Wisdom, steadily and constantly pursues, as its End, the Good of the Whole, (i.e.) the universal Happiness of intelligent Beings; tho' in a perfect Consistency with that, indeed, as absolutely necessary to it, some Individuals may suffer.

It is impossible, indeed, for a finite Understanding to discern all the Relations of things, and to see their remotest Issues, which are fully known to infinite Wisdom; and therefore, it is impossible for us to comprehend the Whole of the divine Administration, & to discern

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If Men will form their Desires & Hopes of Happiness wholly by Sense, and by the present external

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this Goodness of it in some particular Instances, which to our narrow Minds may have a contrary Appearance, when some of his Creatures suffer by his Appointment. But this does not proceed from a Defect of Benevolence towards any of them, but from the Abundance of it towards the Whole, which always intends, and, (being joined with infinite Power and Wisdom,) irresistibly effects the most extensive Good.

What wise and good Man is there, but earnestly desires, and joyfully hopes the common Safety and Happiness, tho' his own private Interest were only attended to in Subordination to the publick Utility? For, there are publick Affections planted in the human Mind, as well as Self-Love; and it is not only the gratifying of the latter, but the former also, that gives true Enjoyment. Now, we are Members not only of a particular Society, but of the whole World; of God's great Family in Heaven and Earth. - We ought, therefore, to acquiesce in it with the greatest Satisfaction of Mind, that He is at the Head of the Universe, superintending all Affairs, and directing them so, as effectually to promote the greatest Good of the entire intelligent System, not confining it to a few Favourites, neglecting the rest; but, (as becomes the Father of a Family and the great Ruler of the World,) generously taking Care for the Benefit of the Whole.

The true Answer, therefore, to all the Difficulties arising from the Dispensations of Providence, and the Objections taken from the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Calamities of good Men, against the Equity & Goodness of the divine Administration, its impartial Regard to Virtue, and therefore, against the Reasonableness of trusting in the Lord at all Times, — is furnished by these Considerations: — That this is a State of Probation; — That it is in Love God chastens his Children; and for their Profit; — That he appoints Afflictions and Trials to his most faithful Servants, to humble and to prove them, & to do them Good at their latter End; — That the most illustrious Exercise,

Appearance of things, the Favour of God will be little in their Esteem, far from being acknowledged a sufficient Portion. For, as he is himself INVISIBLE, the distinguishing Effects of his loving Kindness are not the Object of outward Observation; but to the Mind which believes his Being, and that he is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him, things appear in a quite different Light. There is an important Reality in the divine Approbation which will some Time or other, produce great and substantial Effects, consummating the Felicity of the human Nature; and the Expectation of them, is a mighty Support to the Mind against present Griefs and Fears. For inferior Enjoyments in this Life, (of which there is a great Variety,) all of them the Fruits of the divine Bounty, but dispensed promiscuously to outward Appearance, yet under the Direction of wise Providence; none of them ascertain'd to particular Persons, nor annexed to any peculiar moral Character; for them, I say, a religious Confidence

ercise of Virtue is occasioned by these Trials, to the Praise of the divine Goodness and Wisdom; — That God very often interposes by his Providence to deliver the Righteous out of all their Troubles; and at Length, will deliver them out of them all; — And therefore, finally, that the partial and temporary Sufferings of good Men are no Argument against God's having a Regard, in his Government, to the natural Dispositions & Behaviour of his reasonable Creatures, and his having established a Connexion between Happiness and Virtue.

idence ought always to be accompanied with Submission to the sovereign and gracious Will of God, for this Reason, because we know not what is Good for us all the Days of this vain Life which passeth as a Shadow; but he is the perfect Judge, and therefore, it should be referred entirely to him; which the Heart, conscious of its own Integrity, may do with full Satisfaction, secure of that Truth which the Psalmist declares, that "the Lord God is a Sun and a Shield; the Lord will give Grace & Glory, & no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Upon which he adds, in the following Words, "O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the Man that trusteth in thee," No Man can rationally assure himself of particular future Events in this World, (which depend on the sovereign Counsels of God, and are known only to him,) of particular Enjoyments to be obtained, or Dangers to be avoided, because we cannot be sure that such particular Events are for the best, or have a necessary Connexion with our own greatest Happiness; which is all that our Confidence ought regularly to terminate upon. It is enough that "there is no Want to them that fear God;" & "The young Lions do lack & suffer Hunger, but they that seek the Lord, shall not lack any thing that is good," (i.e) which God, infinitely wise, as well as kind and

compassionate, knows to be good for them, and necessary to their greatest Happiness.

Say, then, in all God's Dispensations, "it is the Lord let him do what seemeth him Good; it is the Lord, who, of very Faithfulness, causeth us to be troubled, all whose Ways are Mercy and Truth to such as keep his Covenant, and remember his Commandments, to do them." But,

III. For the further Confirmation of our Faith, let us consider the Power of God to effect whatever his Wisdom or Goodness may design. It was this Consideration that made the Prophet Isaiah to exhort the Children of Israel to put an entire Trust and Confidence in God — "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for, in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength." In this World, our Friends, who have our Interest most at Heart, & are very wise in contriving for our Advantage, & active in pursuing it; yet many Times meet with unexpected Accidents in the Way, which they cannot surmount.

It is God alone that is able to do whatever he pleaseth both in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, & who is always "a ready Help in Time of Need" to those that please him. All

All the Springs of Motion, are in his Hand, both "in Heaven, and on Earth, in the Sea, and in all deep Places;" and, therefore, his Power is represented to us, not only by such Metaphors, as are apt to create in us an awful Fear of offending him, by which he is described with "a stretched-out Arm," and as "a Man of War," or as "a consuming Fire." But he is also described to us under such Attributions, as are proper to excite our entire Dependence on him for Relief & Support in the greatest Straits and Emergencies; — as, that he is "a Rock of Salvation;" & "a Strong Hold in the Day of Trouble;" "a Refuge for the oppressed;" — and a sure Refuge in Time of Need. — Accordingly, the Power of God is urged as the great Motive to Faith and Confidence in Him in Times of Adversity, and under the most sensible Calamities. — "He healeth the broken in Heart, & bindeth up their Wounds; he calleth the Number of the Stars, and calleth them all by their Names; Great is our Lord, and great is his Power."

To convince us more effectually, that all Power is derived from God, and that we ought wholly to rely on him for Success in all Cases, he often frustrates the best-formed Schemes & Undertakings of Men, so that they are incapable to perform them.

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and, at other Times, effects the greatest Ends by very weak, and, (in all Appearance,) improbable Means ; so that, (as the Wise-Man hath long since observed,) "The Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong." For, "tho there are many Devices in a Man's Heart, yet the Council of the Lord, that shall stand."

These remarkable Interpositions of divine Providence are so necessary to humble the Pride and Vanity of Men, that there could scarce be any Religion without it ; For, if Success always answered to the Power and Probability of Second-Causes, Men would be apt to forget God, and bear themselves high upon it, and to say in their Hearts, the "Power and Might of our Hands have gotten us this."

At other Times, God, to make his Power known, and the Effects of it more conspicuous and memorable, does not interpose in the Deliverance of good Men, till they are brought to the last Extremities ; & then, if in his Wisdom & Goodness, he thinks fit, he certainly will interpose ; and, if he will do it, nothing can oppose his Action. — It was this that supported David in the greatest Dangers and most pressing Necessities : — "Tho I walk thro the Valley and Shadow of Death, (saith he,) I will fear no ill ; for,

for, He is on my Right-Hand, so that I shall not greatly fall." — And again, — "Behold, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, to deliver their Soul from Death, and to feed him in the Time of Dearth."

This Consideration should teach Christians, even when all human Supports fail, and there is no visible Prospect of Deliverance, not to faint when they are rebuked of him, but still to trust in the Name of the Lord, or, (as the Prophet very elegantly expresses it,) to "stay upon their God."

God, therefore, tho' our own Reason cannot by searching find them out, may still have secret Reserves of a good Providence towards us, some unthought-of Reward, treasured up for us against the Day of Necessity.

It was upon this Prospect, when there was no other left, that the Prophet, (as already observed,) expressed his Reliance on the Power and Goodness of God in so noble and sublime a Manner, — "Altho' the Fig-Tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be found in the Vine; - tho' the Labour of the Olive shall fail, & the Field shall yield no Increase; - tho' the Flock be cut-off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stall: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, - I will joy in the God of my Salvation."

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The further Motives to this great Duty, are, the Honour it does to God, and the Benefit of it to Ourselves.

WHEN all human Prospects fall, THEN to pray to God to assist us, and to trust in him that he will do it, is truly to pray to him "as God;" and is, (in the most proper sense,) doing Honour to every Attribute of his Existence; It is acknowledging him Great above all, - great in Wisdom, - infinite in Power, - and abundant in Goodness & Truth? &c.

Hence it is, that all along the Scripture, such High Mention is made of the "PRAYER OF FAITH," because it does Honour, in so signal a Manner, to the eternal Power and God-Head. But further,

What is here recommended, is so advantageous, even for the present Life, that it ought rather to be considered as a Privilege, than a Duty. — God hath made singular Promises in Favour of it; and hath anathematized all who depart from him to trust in the Creatures. Again, In Scripture we are assured, that "He careth for those, and will sustain them who cast their Cares upon him;" - that "He will keep him in perfect Peace, whose Mind is stayed on him," - and that "such shall want no Manner of thing that is good:" (i.e.) nothing that a wise and good Man would reasonably

sonably desire, or is becoming God, in Wisdom and Goodness, to give. — Whereas, — “Cursed is he that putteth his Trust in Man, and taketh Man for his Defence ; and, in his Heart, goeth from the Lord.”

From whence it plainly appears how much God values this Temper, because it is the greatest Honor we can pay to Him. And this Reward is given us by this we acknowledge his Wisdom and Power, his Veracity and Goodness, and manifest that our Belief in them is not a barren Speculation, but fully complete with its proper Effects, as having a due Influence upon us. Indeed, for, that Confidence in God, Reliance upon God, (wherever it is in any eminent Degree,) raiseth the Soul, in a Manner, above itself; and all that can befall it; and gives it, in some Measure, a Resemblance of the invariable Nature of its great Author. — The Scripture calls God, “the Rock of Ages.” Much the same Expression is used in it concerning those who rely upon him. “They, who put their Trust in the Lord, shall be even as the Mount Sion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast forever.” — The regular and religious Confidence (as here explained,) ought to have, indeed, its naturally appropriate produce, this Effect in the Minds of good Men,

Men, to establish them, and to preserve an inward Tranquillity and Peace, free from those disquieting Passions, those tormenting "Sorrows of the World, that work Death," and those disquieting Fears and Discouragements which are the most unhappy, as well as unuseful State we can be in. And therefore, not only with Respect to the other World, when the full Reward shall be enjoyed, & the End of Faith completely obtained, (which is the Salvation of the Soul;) but even with Respect to this Life, They may be pronounced truly happy, who, upon a well-grounded Assurance, have Trust and Confidence in God. For, having the great Principles of Religion, particularly of the perfect Felicity reserved for the Righteous hereafter, which they themselves hope for, from the Testimony of their own Consciences concerning their Sincerity; and acquiescing with Pleasure in that Order and Disposition of things, which the wise and good Governor of the World has appointed as the best, they enjoy stable Equanimity in all the Vicissitudes of Time; and possess their Souls in Patience, without Murmur or Discontent. In a Word,

If we would draw a short Abstract of human Happiness, & bring together all the various Ingredients of it, & digest them into one Prescription, we must

at last fix on this wise & religious Aphorism before us, as the Sum & Comprehension of them all. — Should we carry our Enquiry no further than after the present Felicity, how much better is it secured to the Man who trusts in God, than to him whose Dependence is on the Creature? — The Hope of the former is founded on a Rock, his Soul dwells at Ease, secure in the Skill, in the Power and Affection of his Governor, calm & unconcerned in all his Pursuits: he commits the Event of them to God, who perfectly knows what is best for him, and is both able and willing to do more than he can either ask or think: — The present Bounties of Providence he enjoys with a cheerful Content, without any anxious Sollicitude for the FUTURE. — If things happen contrary to his Desire or Expectation he supports himself with reflecting that it is the Appointment of infinite Wisdom, and infinite Goodness, of One who sees that the Success he desired, would, in some Respect or other, prove a greater Disappointment to him. — In the Days of Danger he is without Fear, for “his Heart standeth fast, and believeth in the the Lord,” and therefore will not shrink. Indeed, in the severest Afflictions, he is attended with Reflections full of Comfort; for, he knows that nothing can distress him beyond the Ability of God to deliver

ver him; - that whatever he suffers, comes upon him by his Permission, "who does not afflict, nor willingly grieve the Children of Men;" but hath wise and gracious Ends in all his Dispensations, tho they do not immediately appear. In a Word, He relies on his God, either to remove the Burden, or to enable him to bear it, or to make him amends for what he endures under it.

A firm Trust in the Almighty, naturally produces Patience, Carefulness, and all other Dispositions of Mind, that alleviate those Calamities which we are not able to remove. (A) It adds Carefulness and Vigour to the Heart in acting, as well as fills it with Reverence, to know that we are under the Observation and Guidance of a perfectly righteous, wise & good Being, who orders all things for the best in the Whole

(A) Philosophy and Religion shew themselves in no one Instance so much, as in preserving our Minds firm and steady.

Religion's ALL.

Si fractus illabatur Orbis, — Impavidum ferrent Ruina.

Should the whole Frame of Nature round him break,

In Ruin and Confusion buried,

He, unconcern'd, would bear the mighty Crack,

And stand secure amidst a falling World.

His Hand the good Man fastens on the Skies,

And bids Earth roll, nor heeds her idle Whirl.

In totum Dextra Dei Scuto similis est.

Whole, and makes "all things work-together for good, to them that love him." — How calmly do those glide thro all, even the roughest Events, who can make a right Estimate of the Happiness, as well as the Virtue of a governable Will, resigned to God! — How does it enervate & enfeeble every Calamity! indeed, triumphs over it; and, by its Conjunction with him that ordains it, may be said to command even what it suffers. (A)

The Man who always lives in this Disposition of Mind, has not the same dark & melancholy Views of human Nature, as he who considers himself abstractedly from this Relation to the supreme Being,

At the same Time that he reflects upon his own Weakness and Imperfection, he comforts himself with the Contemplation of those divine Attributes, which are employed for his Safety & Welfare; — he finds his Want of Foresight, made-up by the Omnipotence of him, who is his Support; — He is not sensible of his own Want of Strength, when he

knows

(A) It was a Philosophical Maxim, that "A WISE, MORAL Man could not be injured, nor miserable;" but sure, it is much more true of him, who has that divine Wisdom of Christian Trust and Resignation, that combines and inwraps all his Choices with God's, and is neither at the Pains nor Hazard of his own Election, but is secure of every thing that is really best for him, unless Omnipotence can be deceived, and Omnipotence defeated.

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knows that his Helper is Almighty. In Short, The Person who has a firm Trust on the supreme Being, is powerful in his Power, - wise in his Wisdom, - and happy in his Happiness. — He reaps the Benefit of every divine Attribute, and loses his own Insufficiency in the Fulness of infinite Perfection.

But, - How different from this is his Condition, whose Trust is in the Creature! - Vexation and Uneasiness, & Uncertainty, attend him in every Stage and State of Life. (A) — Success, indeed, may give him a present Flush of Joy: but, when the short Transport is over, & he begins to consider the precarious Tenure by which he holds his Attainment: The Apprehension of Losing, succeeds to the Care of Acquiring; and the same Anxiety and Solitude that imbibed the Pursuit, disrelishes the Fru-

(A) As to the Hopes of Men engaged in the Affairs of Life, the Object of which is future Good, we must distinguish between the immediate View, (i.e.) the Expectation of Success directly aimed at by the Means used for Riches, Honour, or any other temporal Advantage; and the ultimate Design, which is Happiness.

The former rests on the common Foundation of Prudence and Industry, "all things here come alike to all;" they have no necessary Connection with any moral Character, nor are ascertained by trusting in the Lord: "There is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked." But the other more remote Intention of Happiness in general, which every Man aims at, and which does not depend on particular Events, is sure only to them who sincerely fear God, who keep his Commandments, and confidently rely on his Goodness.

ition itself. — But when Danger becomes immanent, he then finds the Vanity of his Confidence : And, when it actually overtakes him, he is then completely miserable, and Hope itself is swallowed up in Despair — “ Lo , this is the Man that takes not God for his Hope, but trusteth in the Multitude of his Riches, and strengthens himself in his Wickedness.” — Thus weakly provided is he even with REGARD to temporal Happiness, thus foolish and miserable in Comparison with him who trusts in God.

But, If we carry our Reflections further, and consider their different Conditions with Respect to another Life, & their Expectations of Futurity, — The Worldling here gives up the Argument , and pretends not to dispute the Advantage of Religion : HERE he is lost, and undone forever. — A Prospect, which , (tho considered but as possible,) is enough to cast a Damp over his sprightliest Hours , and embitter every Pleasure ; But, if ever he attends to the Arguments that persuade to this great Truth , (& sometimes in Spight of all his Amusements they will intrude,) with what Horror must he reflect on the dreadful Scene it opens before him !

But further, The Practice of this Virtue administers great Comfort to the Mind of Man in Times of Poverty & Affliction ; but, most of all, in the Hour of Death . — When the Soul is hovering in the last

Moments of its Separation, when it is just entering another State of Existence, to converse with Scenes, and Objects, and Companions that are altogether NEW, what can support her under such Tremblings of Thought, such Fear, such Anxiety and Apprehensions, but the casting all her Cares upon him who first gave her Being, who has conducted her thro one State of it, and will be always with her, to guide and comfort her in her Progress thro Eternity.

Thus it appears from the Comparison, that He who trusts in God has much the Advantage even with Respect to present Felicity; and when we take Futurity into the Account, He stands ALONE, and is acknowledged to have no Competitor.

To Conclude, — We are passing through a World of no great Moment in itself, but in the Consequences of our Conduct in it, of the utmost Importance to us, where we find ourselves in the midst of Snares not to be guarded against, & of Difficulties not to be surmounted by any Wisdom or Strength merely our own; and wretched, indeed, must "the Days of our Pilgrimage" have been, had not God, (in Judgment remembering Mercy,) found Means to give us the Comfort of his Help again, and to establish us with his free Spirit:" "Had he not granted

granted us his Word for a Lamp to our Feet, and a Light to our Paths.

SERMON

"Who, then, is there among you that feareth the Lord, yet at certain Seasons walketh in Darkness and hath no Light?" "Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, and he will abundantly supply him; — for, in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength."

SERMON LIII.

On Delighting in God.

Psalm xxxvii. 4. "Delight thou in the Lord,
and He shall give thee thy Heart's Desire."

It may seem strange, that Brute-Creatures, by the mere Instinct of Nature, should observe so much Order in all their Actions, and so constantly pursue the End for which they were made; and that MAN, (a thoughtfull, inquisitive Being,) should almost always act at Random, and be the only irregular Part of the whole Creation. — But, when we consider, that he is compounded of two Principles, directly opposite to, & perpetually warring with each others; that his Body and Soul are not more united in their Interests, than they are divided in their Inclinations and Desires; we shall cease to wonder, that he is so inconsistent with himself, and various in all his Actions. For,

Till we can maintain a good Correspondence betwixt our RATIONAL and SENSITIVE Faculties, and make them both agree in one common Pursuit; — till

we

we can convince ourselves, that the Entertainments of Reason make-up the Happiness of the whole Man; and not only prepare for us a Heaven in Reversion; but also give us the most refined Pleasures here, that we are capable of enjoying; but Affections will be always divided between the Pleasures of Sense and those of Reason, and we shall be apt to prefer SENSUAL Gratifications, to spiritual Delights, because the one are present, and the other, falsely supposed to be altogether unknown, and at a Distance.

Nothing, therefore, can be of greater Service to Mankind, than to direct them to a Way, that leads to PRESENT as well as FUTURE Felicity, by shewing them, that in Religion, the Happiness of both Worlds consists; & that to "delight in the Lord," comprehends in it all the Joys, which either Sense or Reason can desire, which either Heaven or Earth can give us; "Delight thou in the Lord; and he shall give thee thy Heart's Desire."

In discussing upon which World I shall shew, to

First, wherein this "Delight in God" consists.

II. That to delight in God is the highest Act of Religion. And, *Ad aliud argumentum* *concludit*

III. That it is the supreme Felicity of our Nature. And, *Serm. Ll. First,*

First, Of the Import of the Phrase, "to delight in the Lord." — To "delight in the Lord," is to take Pleasure in his Service and Worship; to approach his Altars with Joy & Thanksgiving; to hear his Word, with Reverence and Attention; to converse with him here in Meditation and Prayer; earnestly longing to enjoy him hereafter in Glory. — It is to have such a lively and affecting Sense of the Amiability of his Nature, that as the Hart desireth the Water-Brooks; so our Souls should "pant & thirst" after God, as our Sovereign Good: with "nothing in Competition with him"; nothing, but in Order to the Enjoyment of him; — having "the greatest Intention of Mind", and Earnestness of Endeavours so to regard God, and mind the Concerns of Religion, as thereby to attain eternal Happiness; — to be as serious, as intent in it, as, or more than earthly-minded Men are; or can be, after the things of this World. — God, Religion, the Concerns of our Souls, and eternal Happiness should be our FIRST and principal Care, and all others made subservient to this great Design, and be no further hindred by us, than as they tend to promote it!

This is to "Delight in the Lord." — But going to shew that to "delight in God" in this

ship Manner, is the highest Act of Religion.

This, I shall evince from these Considerations.

First. We hereby entertain in our Minds, a Sense and Notion of God, altogether worthy of him; and ascribe that Kind of Honour & Praise to him, which he seems most to regard and value.

Secondly. We are hereby enabled to perform his Will in the most acceptable Manner, by acting upon a Principle of Filial-Love; which is the strongest Motive to universal Obedience. As,

First. We hereby entertain in our Minds, a Sense and Notion of God, altogether worthy of him, and ascribe that Kind of Honour & Praise to him, which he seems most to regard and value.

Man, as he is a Being, little lower than the Angels; - as he is Heir of Heaven, and a Kind of Representative of God himself, upon Earth, is intitled by the Prerogative of his Nature, to address himself to God with a delightful Freedom, and with the humble Confidence of a Son, towards a beloved, & loving Father.

In all the Revelations which God has been pleased to make of himself to Mankind, he takes upon him the soft and endearing Appellations of a Father and Friend,

Serm. LIII.

Friend, or a Redeemer and Comforter; and assures us; that his Kindness for us, under each of these Characters, surpasseth all our Notions of Love and Endearment in them. And, Shall we be made capable of so great an Honour, & not enjoy it? Shall we banish ourselves to the Distance of Aliens and Strangers, when we are so kindly invited to become, (as Abraham is styled,) "the Friends of God."

Truly, most unworthy, as well as unfit, shall we be, of the Enjoyment of God, of Heaven and Happiness, if we can take no Delight in the View and Contemplation of these things now; whose Presence and Enjoyment, will be the Happiness of the Righteous forever hereafter.

Are we afraid to approach so great a Being with Delight and Confidence, on Account of the infinite Distance there is between us? Or, are we terrified by those few Instances which the Scripture records of his Wrath and Severity against Sinners?

If, indeed, we are resolved to continue in our Sins, we have just Reason to tremble in the Presence of God; for, towards such He is represented as "a great Judge," and as "a consuming Fire." But, If we draw near to him in Faith, in Love, and final Duty, and make our Hearts fit Mansions for his Holy-Spirit to dwell in, He will delight to draw

near to us, and notwithstanding the infinite Distance between us; "Will even come, and make his Abode with us;" which is not very probable; that I
believe he doth not; and has no Right to it. As it hath always been esteemed the highest Title of Honour, that was ever ascribed to an earthly Prince, to be stiled "The Love and Delight of Mankind;" In like Manner, God is pleased to account it the chief Glory which redounds to him, from the Works of his Hands, to be loved and praised, to be adored and delighted-in by his Creatures, as the only Object that deserves their Affections. (A)

But, to approach him only "with Fear & Trembling," as an over-awful and angry Being; and to imagine, that he requires a greater Distance of our Affections, than to be "delighted-in" by us, is, to derogate from his Perfections, & unfairly to represent the Condition and Privileges of the rational Part of the Creation. It is to magnify his Greatness, by lessening, indeed, at the Expence of his Goodness, in which, chiefly, (as he himself assures us,) all his Greatness consists; For, when Moses desired, that "God would show him his Glory; Behold, the the Lord passed-by before him, and proclaimed,

"The

(A) Prayer, compared to Praise, is but a fuliginous Smoke, issuing from a Sence of Sin, and human Infirmitie. Praises are the clear Sparks of Piety, and sooner fly upward.

"The Lord, - The Lord God, merciful & gracious,
"long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and
"Truth; keeping Mercy for thousands; forgiving
"Iniquity, & Transgression and Sin." And indeed,
In our Conceptions of things, we cannot but think
the noblest Employment of a Being, infinitely per-
fect in himself, is to do Good, & communicate Hap-
piness to others. And, the LOWER the Majesty of
God descends in Acts of Kindness to his Creatures,
the HIGHER he raises our Notions of him, and of all
his adorable Perfections. Therefore,

Secondly, By thus "delighting in God," we are
enabled to perform his Will in the most acceptable
Manner, by acting upon a Principle of Filial-Love,
which is the strongest Motive to universal Obedi-
ence. For,

Can we imagine, that a God of Love, and who is
Love itself, - that a Being thus glorious and merci-
ful, loving and compassionate, can take more Plea-
sure in the distant awful Approaches of his Cre-
tures, than in their joyful, thankful Acknowl-
edgment of his Favours? Surely we cannot. For,

As the Service which we pay to an earthly Ma-
gistrate, is never so acceptable, when it proceeds
from Fear, or from a servile Dread of his Authority;
as when it flows from Respect, and an affectionate
Concern

Concern for his Person: — So here, our Sacrifice of Praise & Thanksgiving will be rejected at the Throne of Grace, unless we offer up our Hearts along with it: for the great King of Heaven and Earth delights to reign, in the Affections of his Creatures. He regards not so much the Obedience itself, as the Intention with which we perform it; and rejects, or accepts it, as it proceeds from either a servile, or a generous Compliance to his Will, — from Fear, or from a Heart devoted to his Service. For, tho' Fear, in Conjunction with other Graces, is a necessary Virtue, and may be used as a useful Check upon the aspiring Passion of Love, to preserve it from the Extravagances of Enthusiasm, and awe it within the Bounds of a sober and rational Devotion; yet, of itself, it is a narrow Clavish Passion, and can never prove a Principle of universal Obedience, because it takes in but half of our Duty, and makes us only careful not to offend; — whereas, Love is of such an active Nature, that wherever it takes Possession, it exerts all our Faculties and Powers to please the beloved Object. — Hence it is, that Love is frequently styled in Scripture, “the fulfilling of the Law,” because it not only includes in it, but communicates Virtue, to all the other Parts of our Duty. It animates our Faith, encourages our Hope, and exalts our Charity, to the highest Degree of religious Perfection.

Serm. LIII.

Love

Love is such a cheerful Principle of Obedience, as will make the hardest "Yoke easy," and the heaviest "Burden light," and carry us thro the most difficult Part of our Duty with Pleasure and Alacrity. Whereas, Fear, (when alone,) when it is not actuated by Filial-Love, is a melancholy Passion, excluding the Graces of Hope & Joy, the delightful Acts of Praise & Thanksgiving from its Society. It frights weak Minds with terrible Apprehensions of Sin, where no Sin is; & lessens their Confidence in God to such a Degree, as to put them into the Condition of accursed Spirits, whose Faith brings forth no Fruit, but Despair, who "believe and tremble;" They "go sorrowing all the Day-Long." A false Notion THIS in Religion; which under the Gospel-Dispensation of Grace & Mercy, dishonours God no less than Atheism itself; since it cannot be a greater Crime to deny his Being, than to represent him as a stern and implacable Judge, who is deaf to all our Cries, & takes-delight in afflicting his Creatures.

By Men of such severe and inexorable Dispositions, and not by a God of infinite Compassion, we may well suppose those rigid Decrees were formed, which have PREDESTINATED some Persons to Grace and Salvation, without any Respect to their Behaviour to others. Had not all of us done violence to our

The highest Act of Religion.

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Jesus has shewed the Rest of Mankind " no Place of Repentance , tho' they seek it carefully with Tears." An Opinion , which impiously attempts to circumscribe , and let-bounds to unlimited Goodness and Mercy , & gives such dreadful Apprehensions of God , as destroy all those Schemes of Happiness and Satisfaction , that are founded on Love and Delight in him . — An Absurdity , of which we need only say , that it renders ineffectual all the Laws and Threats ; with all the Promises of the Gospel .

Upon the Whole of this Argument ; Fear is only the Beginning of Religion ; but Love is the Confirmation and Perfection of it : Is the Principle which animates the Religion of Angels , & of " the Spirits of just Men made perfect , " and lifts us up into a Communion and Fellowship with them ; and is not only the Means of their Happiness , but their Heaven itself ; in the Practice of which , all the Felicity they enjoy , or we expect , doth chiefly consist : — Which leads me to shew ,

II. That thus to " Delight in God , " is the supreme Felicity of our Nature ; for , upon this , we have the Grant of every thing , — " Delight thou in the Lord , & he will give thee thy Heart's Desire ."

That this is the supreme Felicity of our Nature , may be proved by considering this Duty ,

Serm. LIII.

First

First, absolutely in itself, as it is the principal End and Design of our Creation.

II. As it is the Foundation of Pleasure, & gives the other Enjoyments of Life, all their Agreeableness.

III. By setting-forth some of its peculiar Properties & Advantages, and by shewing how truly great are its present Comforts, & how unspeakably great will be its future Reward.

First, I shall consider this Duty absolutely in itself, as it is the principal End and Design of our Creation.

Since the Goodness of God would never permit him to create any Appetites, without providing a Suitable Object to satisfy them; That importunate Desire of Happiness, which he hath implanted in our Nature; & the Emptiness of all those Pleasures, which he hath provided here for our Entertainment, are plain Demonstrations, that Man was made for some higher Good, than this World can give him. For the Understanding and Will are of so spiritual a Nature, that nothing but what is RATIONAL, nothing but what is DIVINE, can be an adequate Pleasure to them. — The Entertainments of Sense are

The Supreme Felicity of our Nature. 203

and this World too narrow a Place for our
naturall Desires to range in. — By the Contem-
plation of infinite Truth, and the Enjoyments of
an all-sufficient Good, can quench our unbounded
Thirst after Knowledge and Felicity; and the most
enlarged Thoughts are swallowed up with reflecting
upon the Glories of Heaven, upon all the Wonders
and Delights of a Blessed Eternity. — Heaven
therefore, is the proper Place for im-
mortal Souls to move in; and when our Faculties
are employed in knowing & loving God, when our
Understanding contemplates his infinite Wisdom
and Knowledge, and our Will embraces him as our
sovereign Good, they exert themselves with Plea-
sure as upon their proper Objects, and answer the
Ends for which they were created. For,

Let us consider the Pleasure of the Will in
choosing God for our chiefest Good.

That Man is not sufficient for his own Happiness,
and that Nothing in this World, but God, can make
him happy, is so true and melancholy a Reflexion,
that were there not a Being above, kind and able,
to have Recourse-to, this World would be an un-
comfortable Place, and Life itself an intollerable
Oppression. — But, when we are assured that the
Favour of God will supply all Defects of Wisdom
and

and Power in us; will give us an Interest in his Perfections, and Security, that, (as Occasion requires,) they will be employed for our Advantage; & when, in Order to obtain this great Privilege, our Will hath chosen God as its Sovereign-Good, and we desire to do nothing, and be nothing, but what we are sure will please him; we are then in a Manner, advanced into a Participation of the Divine Nature, and this Earth, amidst all its Troubles, becomes a Kind of Heaven. But,

That we may be the more perfectly convinced
that without God, we can neither form an Idea of
Happiness, nor have any Possibility of obtaining it,
let us consider,

II. How mean and insipid every other Enjoy-
ment of Life is in itself, till it is improved & made
agreeable to us, by this divine Delight and Com-
placency.

If we run over the whole Circle of human Pleasures, as they are elegantly described, and were no less elegantly enjoyed, by the wise King of Israel, we shall find that they are so far from administering any Solid Comfort and Satisfaction to us, that they are nothing but "Vanity," and, indeed, what is worse, "Vexation of Spirits."

Wealth, Honour, and sensual Pleasures, are the three great Idols of the World, each of which has innumerable votaries, who think the Attainment of One darling Delight deserves the utmost Care and Endeavour of their whole Lives. — But, if all these Ingredients of carnal Felicity joined together, and enjoyed by Solomon in their utmost Perfection, were not able to form an entire Satisfaction, and fill up the Measure of his Desires; — How vain are our Hopes, & how empty our Expectations, when within the narrow Fruition of ONE of these imaginary Pleasures all our Happiness is confined? — Setting aside, then, the Trifles of this World, we must look out for some other Pleasure that is more worthy of our Nature, & that can reward all our Pains. And, after we have searched Heaven and Earth for our Felicity, we shall at last address ourselves to God as our sovereign Good, and cry out with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides Thee." For, the good Things of this Life are Trifles of so little Importance that they are unworthy to be the Objects either of our Love or Aversion, — God alone is to be delighted in, because he alone is able to answer all our Hopes, provide for all our Wants, and fill up our immense Capacities of Enjoyments.

Serm. LIII.

And

And, when this Delight in God is the Principle of all our Actions, it sanctifies our Use of all other Pleasures, & heightens our Relish of them: Which was the Third Thing I proposed to consider, [viz]

III. The peculiar Properties and Advantages of the Duty before us; for, truly great are its present Consolations, and unspeakably great will be its future Reward. As,

First, Do we know any Satisfaction in Life comparable to That which springs from Devotion and the Discharge of Religion? — This is a Delight that grows and improves under Thought and Reflexion; Whereas all other Pleasures expire in the Enjoyment.

If to be resolv'd in all our Doubts, If to be cleans'd from all our Sins, & to be freed from all our Fears, is a Pleasure to us: - All this, and much more, the Practice of fervent and constant Piety and Devotion, (which is "Delight in the Lord,") brings along with it, and secures to us beyond the Power of Time or Change. For, nothing can interrupt our Communion with Heaven; our Prayers will find their Way thither from the utmost Parts of the Earth, and God hath promised that "if we ask, we shall receive." But further, An exact Conformity to the Divine Laws will make our Conscience calm and serene.

which settle, our Minds in perfect Rest & Tranquility. For Religion is the natural State of the Soul, and everything that is natural, is pleasant: And, as when all the Parts of the Body perform their proper Functions, and answer the Ends for which they were designed, there arises a sweet Enjoyment and Complacency upon the Whole, which we call Health: So, when the inferior Faculties of the Soul act in Subordination to Reason, and the Powers of Reason in entire Submission to God, there results from both, the most sensible & affecting of all Pleasures, which we call, a good Conscience, which makes a Man enjoy himself, & gives a new & better Relish to every thing he does? Again,

"When we 'Delight in God,' as our chiefest Good; the most exquisite Entertainments of this World will appear to us but as mere Trifles, and of no Value in Comparison to the things which are held before us. Again,

This Divine Virtue will likewise inspire us with such a noble Confidence in God, as will set us above the Reach of all the little Accidents and Misfortunes of Life, as being assured that nothing can happen to us, but by the Appointment of an infinitely wise, and gracious God, who loves us better than we do ourselves, and denys all his Chastisements

ments for the Good of those who love him, this will make us easy under the most calamitous Circumstances that can befall us, and supply the place of all other temporary Blessings and Advantages.

¶ Lastly. From this "Delight in God," (which is the Fulness of all, and of every Grace and Virtue,) we are assured, that all our Sorrows and Disgraces, and even Death itself, (the most dreadful of all human Evils,) will be only an Introduction to Life immortal, to Honours unspeakable, and to Joys full of Glory, which, (as sure as God is true,) will be the Portion of all those who LOVE and DELIGHT in Him.

To Conclude, — What, then, can be more reasonable, what more advantageous and pleasant to us, than to entertain ourselves with agreeable & delightful Apprehensions of the best and most worthy of Beings? Who, (as he is endued with infinite Perfections,) is the fittest Object of the Love and Adoration of immortal Souls; and, as he hath been infinitely kind and beneficent to us, creating a whole World to serve us here, & hath provided a Heaven to glorify us hereafter, we ought, in Gratitude, to love him, "because he FIRST loved us." — For, what could infinite Goodness do more, to enflame our Love, than to make our Duty to consist in Delight.

light, and Pleasure itself, and to offer us all the Reward that "our Hearts can desire," to encourage our Performance of it? — If these Considerations cannot strongly affect us, & charm our Hearts into a willing Obedience, we may assure ourselves that no other Motive will be able to make any Impression upon us; For, *Exhortation to the Duties of Piety*.

All the Arguments that can convince us of the Agreeableness of Religion, & all the Motives which can engage us in the Practice of it, are contained in the Words before us: — For, "desirest thou Length of Days?" — "Length of Days is in her Right-Hand;" or — "Riches and Honour" are in her Left-Hand are Riches and Honour; yea, durable Riches and Honour," for, "exalt her, and she will promote thee; she will bring thee to great Honour, when thou dost embrace her." — Wouldest thou be at Peace and enjoy Pleasure? — "Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace," — Wouldest thou enjoy the good Things of this Life, and God forever? — Well: — "Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life which now is, as well as That which is to come." — "She is a Tree of Life to them that find her."

"Delight thou in the Lord, and he will give thee thy Heart's Desire."

Sermon

SERMON LIV.

On praising God.

Ephe. v. 20. "Giving Thanks always for all
things to God."

Gratitude, Praise and Thanksgiving to God for
the daily Mercies we receive, & for his Excellencies
in himself, is a Duty so natural, that it may seem at
First-Sight needless to be inculcated upon any; But
while All are ready to acknowledge this, in general;
yet each neglects to bring-home the important
Truth in particular; at least they do not think them-
selves obliged to the Performance of this Duty in
that comprehensive Latitude here expressed, to be
"giving Thanks," - "Always," - "for All things."

That I may, therefore, contribute somewhat to-
wards the encouraging and perfecting this Virtue in
us; I shall, therefore, discourse on the Words in the
following Order,

First, I shall enquire into the Import of them, and
shew what we are to understand by " Giving
Thanks," - "Always," - "for All things." And
then point out,

"I. To whom this Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving is due, [viz] to God; "Giving Thanks", always, for all things, To God." And then,

III. The Reasons and Grounds of it. And,

First, Of the Import of the Words, "Giving Things, - always, - for all things,"

To begin with the First, "Giving-Thanks,"

Giving Thanks imports our receiving Benefits with a hearty Sense, and grateful Affection. — And surely, the least Homage we in Gratitude owe, and can pay to Almighty God, is to confess our Dependence, & Obligation to him for whatever we enjoy.

This Duty further requires our Endeavours to make a satisfactory Requital of Benefits, so far as our Ability permits, & Opportunity offers. Indeed, Our Righteousness or Beneficence doth not extend to God, who already enjoys supreme Glory: but yet we may declare our Readiness to serve and extol him; we may by a dutiful Behaviour, highly please him; we may by our Charity to those whom he loves, make an acceptable, though not an adequate Return for his Benefits. But further, Tho'

(A) The following Subject, (an important and essential Duty from the foregoing Attributes,) being fixed upon and collected after page 327, could no otherwise be inserted, than by the Arrangement of the Pages, as here done.

Tho' we are excused from MATERIAL, yet are we more strongly engaged to offer SPIRITUAL Sacrifices to God. The Incense of fervent Devotion, and holy Living, the Thank-Offering of Praise, we must still send up to Heaven: Such things God approves of, & will accept, as real Testimonies of our Thankfullness, in Return for his Benefits. But further,

" Giving Thanks, Always."

As to the TIME allotted for this Duty, there is no certain Rule for it; but it should be VERY OFTEN, as no Moment of our Life wants sufficient Matter of Praise to God; He being ALWAYS doing us good, so should no Day escape without signal Expressions of our Thankfulness to him. — Holy David is full to this Purpose; and the Consideration of so noble a Pattern, added to the evident Reasonableness of the Duty, ought to engage us to the FREQUENT Practice of it. "The Heavens, (says he,) declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work."

How shameful then is it, that We, the Flower of the Creation, the most obliged, and best capable of doing it, should so seldom or never contribute our Endeavours to advance his Glory! — We should therefore appoint, and punctually observe proper Times, to perform this Duty of serious Meditation

and affectionate Acknowledgement of the divine
Bounty. And,

For our Rule herein, I would propose the general
Direction given by the Royal Prophet, [viz.] "It is
a good thing to give Thanks unto the Lord, and to
sing Praises unto thy Name, O Thou Most High,
To shew-forth thy Loving-Kindness every Morn-
ing, and thy Faithfulness every Night."

If we thus constantly BEGIN and CLOSE our Days;
dedicating those remarkable Periods of Time to bless
God, "making the Out-goings of the Morning and
the Evening to praise him," we may be supposed to
discharge this Duty, and properly be said to give
Thanks ALWAYS. - Tho' no Time is improper to be
thankful; for, every Moment we receive Favours,
and, therefore, every Moment, owe Thanks.

But further, "Giving Thanks always for All
Things." Tis a general Fault, that the most common Fa-
vours of God are like the ordinary Works of Na-
ture, most admirable, and yet least regarded. The
constant Rising of the Sun, - the Descent of fruit-
ful Showers, - the Return of temperate Seasons,
the Continuance of our Life, - the Enjoyment of
Health, - the competent Means of a Livelihood, -
the

the daily Protection from incident Dangers, - the Helps of improving Knowledge, - obtaining Virtue, - becoming happy, - & such-like most excellent Benefits are little regarded by us, & we seldom return Thanks for them. Possibly some ~~WONDERFUL~~ Instance of Providence, some extraordinary Judgment, or miraculous Deliverance may rouse and awaken our Attention; like the Israelites, who, when God slew them, "THEN they remembered, that he was their Rock, the high God, their Redeemer." But, This is not so much the Effect of Gratitude, as of Necessity. The truly grateful are studious to know their Obligations, that they may render an answerable Return.

Not one Blessing, or the least favourable Passage of Providence should escape our Remembrance. We must not forget who formed us in the Womb, - who brought us into Light, - assisted our Infancy, - educated our Child-hood, - governed our Youth, and conducted our riper Years, thro manifold Hazards, Troubles and Misfortunes. — Nor, in our Prosperity, when we possess an Affluence of good things, should we be unmindfull of him, who relieved our Necessities, - supplied our Wants, - sustained our Adversity, & delivered us out of all our Afflictions.

As to the Matter, then, or particular Instances for which

which we are to thank God, (without minutely calculating the Greatness and Number of the divine Benefits,) we see, that no Occurrence, great or small, common or particular, - past or present, - pleasant or sad, is excluded from being the Subject of our Thanksgiving; Each may prove beneficial to us; & we are, with a cheerful Contentedness, and grateful Sense, to receive them all from God's Hands.

Indeed, We are obliged to give Thanks not only for PLEASANT and PROSPEROUS Occurrences of Providence, but for those also which are ADVERSE and DISAGREEABLE; - not only for good Instruction, but for every wholesome and seasonable Correction; which usually proceeds from Love and Kindness; "for whom God loves, he chasteneth."

God best knows what is most fit for us; he, therefore, often wisely dispensest Poverty and Affliction to us, which will teach us to "know ourselves, " to depend on God, and have Recourse to him for Help, and Assistance. But further,

We are obliged to thank God not only for TEMPORAL, but principally for SPIRITUAL and ETERNAL Blessings. For, As much as the reasonable Soul, (in Dignity of Nature, and Purity of Substance,) excels our Body; — As much as the blissful Ravishments of the Spirit far surpass the dull Satisfactions of Sense

Sense; - As much as Eternity exceeds that short Space of Time, which terminates this transitory Life; So, in Proportion should our Delight-in, and Gratitude for spiritual Blessings, surpass our Affections & Thanksgivings for temporal Accommodations.

We are, indeed, greatly indebted to God for our Creation and Preservation; but we are much more so, for our Redemption,

If for Success in our worldly Affairs, for escaping threatened Dangers, - for defeating the Designs of our Adversaries, we make our Song for Victory; How much more ought we to do This, for avoiding the Hazard of Eternal Torments, - for the happy Progress of our spiritual Concerns, for conquering Sin and Satan, those irreconcileable Enemies to our everlasting Peace. That our Minds are enlightened with the Knowledge of God, and his glorious Attributes; - of Christ, & his Holy Gospel; and the Way which conducts us to true Happiness; - that by divine Assistance we are able to avoid the Allurements, - withstand the Violence of Temptation; - to bridle exorbitant Passions, - and correct vicious Inclinations; - these Mercies much more require our hearty Thanks, than that we are able by our natural sense.

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We to penetrate the most abstruse Mysteries, or by our Strength and Power to subdue even Kingdoms. The Forgiveness of our Sins much more obliges us to a grateful Acknowledgement of the divine Goodness, than if God was to enrich us with all the Treasures contained in the Bowels of the Earth, or Bottom of the Sea. One Glympse of his favourable Countenance should more inflame our Affections, than to be invested with all the Spendor of Worldly-Glory, or Worldly-Wisdom. But,

Lastly, I am now to direct you to the Object of our Praise, [viz] God; - We are to "give Thanks, always, for all things, To God."

The Object of our Praise is God, to whom we are obliged for the most weighty and valuable Benefits; from whom we receive whatever is necessary for our Sustence, convenient for our Use, and pleasant for our Enjoyment; to whom we owe whatever Good we possess, or can hope-for hereafter. — In a Word, To Him, whose Benefits are immense, innumerable, inexpressibly good and valuable: - "For, who can utter the mighty Acts of the Lord? or who can shew-forth all his Praise?" — To this God, this great and only Patron, and Benefactor of ours, we owe this most natural, easy, just, and pleasant Duty of

of giving Thanks; To whom, if we wilfully refuse, or carelessly neglect, to discharge, (in some Measure,) our due Debt of Gratitude, for his inestimable Benefits and Mercies, we shall be most ungrateful, and deplorably wretched and miserable.

I shall now proceed,

III, To the Reasonableness of it - and our Obligations to it: - Which will appear whether we consider it absolutely in itself, as a Debt of our Natures; - or compare it with other Duties, and show the Rank it bears among them; - Or, set-out, in the last Place, some of its peculiar Properties and Advantages with regard to the devout Performer of it. And,

First, The Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving, (considered absolutely in itself,) is the Debt and Law of our Nature.

We have such Faculties bestowed on us by our Creator, as make us capable of satisfying this Debt, and obeying this Law; and therefore, we never procure more naturally and freely, than when we are thus employed.

It is one of the earliest Instructions given us by Philosophy, & which hath ever since been approved and inculcated by the wisest Men of all Ages, that

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the Original Design of making Man, was, that he might PRAISE and HONOUR Him who made him.

When God had finished this goodly Frame of things, the World; and put-together the several Parts of it, according to his infinite Wisdom, in exact Number, Weight, & Measure, there was still wanting a Creature, in these lower Regions, that could apprehend the Beauty, Order, and excellent Contrivance of it, that, from contemplating the Gift, might be able to raise itself up to the great Giver, and do Honour to all his Attributes. - Every thing, indeed, that God made, did, in some Sense, glorify its Author, inasmuch as it carried upon it the plain Mark and Impress of the Deity, and was an Effect worthy of that first Cause from whence it flowed. And, thus might "the Heavens" be said, at the first Moment in which they stood-forth, to "declare his Glory, &c, the Firmament to shew his handy Work." — But, This was an imperfect defective Glory; the Sign was of no Signification here below, whilst there was No ONE here, as yet, to take Notice of it.

Man, therefore, was formed to supply this Want, endued with Powers fit to find-out, and to acknowledge these unlimited Perfections — and then put into this Temple of GOD, this lower World, as the PRIEST OF NATURE, to offer-up the Incense of Praise and

and Thanks for the Muta and INVISIBLE Part of
the Creation.

This hath been the Opinion, all-along of the most thoughtful Men, down from the most ancient Times: And, tho' it be not demonstrative; yet is it what we cannot but judge highly reasonable, if we do but consider Man, as he is, (above other Creatures,) a reflecting, thoughtful and inquisitive Being. — The peculiar Reason of which seems to be drawn from the Praise and Honour that was, (not-only to redound to God from him, but,) to be given to God by him.

This Duty, therefore, is the Debt and Law of our Nature. And which will more distinctly appear if we consider the two ruling Principles of our Minds, (the Understanding and the Will,) apart; in both which it is deeply founded. — In the Understanding, as the Principle of Reason, which owns and acknowledges it; and in the Will, as in the Fountain of Gratitude & Return; which prompts, and even constrains us to pay it.

Reason was given us as a Rule and Measure, by the Help of which, we were to proportion our Esteem of every thing, according to the Degrees of Perfection & Goodness we found in them. — It cannot, therefore, (if it doth its Office at all,) but apprehend

prehend God, as the ~~most~~ and most ~~worthy~~ Being; and, as such, cannot think of him without Praising him. For, it depends not on the Understanding how it shall apprehend things, any more than it doth on the Eye, how visible Objects shall appear to it.

But, This Duty takes a further and surer Hold on us by the Means of our Will, and that strong Bent towards Gratitude, which the Author of our Nature hath implanted in us.

There is not a more active Principle than This in the Mind of Man; and surely, that which deserves its utmost Force, and should set all its Springs on Work, is God, the great and universal Benefactor, from whom alone we receive whatever we either have, or are; and to whom we can possibly repay Nothing but our Praises; - For, "Of Him are all things" - yea, "of him, and thro' him, and to him are all things" (i.e.) "Of Him," as the Author; "Thro' Him," as the Preserver and Governor; "and To Him," as the End and Perfection of all things: "To whom, therefore," (as it follows,) "be Glory forever." Now,

As no Man hath benefitted God at any Time, and yet every Man is continually benefitted by him, what strong Obligation must we be under to THANK him? It is true,

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Our Thanks are really as insignificant to him, as any other Kind of Return could be: - In themselves, indeed, they are worthless - but his Goodness hath put a Value upon them, - He hath declared that he will accept them in Lieu of the vast Debt we owe him. And ! After this; Which is fittest for us, to dispute how they came to be taken as an Equivalent, or to pay them ?

It is, therefore, the Voice of Nature, (as far as Gratitude itself is so,) that the Good Things we receive from above, should be sent back again thither in Thanks and Praises; "as the Rivers run into the Sea; to the Place," (the Ocean of Beneficence,) "from whence the Rivers came; thither should they return again."

II. Let us now compare this Duty with Others, and see what Rank it bears among them. And here, We shall find, that, among all the Acts of Religion immediately addressed to God, this is by far the noblest and most excellent. Other Parts of Devotion, such as Confession & Prayer, seem not originally to be designed for Man, nor Man for them. They imply Guilt and Want, with which the State of Innocence was not acquainted.

Had Man continued in THAT Estate, his Worship, (like the Devotions of Angels,) had been paid

to Heaven in pure Acts of Thanksgivings; & nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying the good things of Life, as Nature directed; and praising the God of Nature who bestowed them.

But, Being fallen from Innocence and Abundance, having contracted Guilt, and forfeited his Right to all Sorts of Merits, Prayer and Confession became necessary for a Time to retrieve the Loss; and restore him to that State wherein he should be able to live without them: - These are fitted therefore, for a lower Dispensation, before which, in Paradise, there was nothing but Praise; neither after it will there be any thing else in Heaven.

Our perfect Sate did, at first, and will at last, consist in the Performance of this Duty; and herein, therefore, lies the Excellency and Honour of our Nature.

The Argument of St. Paul, which sets Charity above the rest of the Christian Graces, (as abiding forever,) will give Praise also the Pre-eminence over all the other Parts of the Christian Worship; & we may conclude our Reasonings, therefore, as he doth his - "and now abideth Confession, Prayer & Praise; these three; but the greatest of these, is Praise."

It is so certainly on Other Accounts, as well as This; particularly, as it is the most disinterested Branch

Branch of our religious Service ; such as hath the MOST of God, and the LEAST of Ourselves in it, of any we pay ; and therefore, approaches the nearest of any to a pure, & free, & perfect Act of Homage.

Our Requests for FUTURE, and even our Acknowledgements for PAST Mercies, centre purely in Ourselves, and our Interest is the direct Aim of them. But, Praise is a free and generous Principle, which proposes no other End to itself, but to do, as is fit for a Creature endowed with such Faculties to do, towards the most perfect and beneficent of Beings, and to pay the willing Tribute of Honour THERE, WHERE the Voice of Reason directs us to pay it.

In short, Praise is the most-excellent Work, - a Work common to the Church TRIUMPHANT & MILITANT, & which lifts us up into a Communion and Fellowship with Angels. The Matter about which it is conversant, is always the Perfections of God's Nature, & the Act itself is the Perfection of Ours.

This will be yet more evident,

III. If we set-out some of its peculiar Properties and Advantages which recommend it to the devout Performer. And,

First, It is the most pleasing Part of our Devotions ; It proceeds always from a lively, cheerful Temper

of Mind; and it cherishes and improves what it proceeds from.

Petition and Confession are the Language of the indigent and the guilty, the Breathing of a sad and contrite Spirit; but "Praise is pleasant and comely." (A) Indeed,

The whole Composition of this Duty is such, as, throughout, speaks Ease and Delight to the Mind, It proceeds from Love and from Thankfulness, which gives every thing we do, or enjoy, its Relish and Agreeableness, involving in it the Memory of PAST Benefits, the actual PRESENCE of them to the Mind, and the REPEATED Enjoyment of them. And,

As its Principle is, such is its End also: For, it procureth Quiet and Ease to the Mind, by venting those Exultations it is so full of, and which would be uneasy and troublesome to it, if they were kept in. — If the thankful restrained, it would be Pain and Grief to them: but THEN, Then is their "Soul satisfied, as with Marrow and Fatness, when their Mouth praiseth God with joyful Lips." But,

Secondly, It is another distinguishing Property of divine Praise, that it enlargeth the Powers and Capacities of our Souls, turning them from little and low

(A) See Note (A) page 297.

low things, upon their greatest and noblest Object, the Divine Nature, & employing them in the Discovery and Admiration of those several Perfections that adorn it.

Noble Objects are to the Mind, what the Sun-Beams are to Nature, which opens and unfolds, at its vivifying Rays ; and all the Powers that were hid and locked-up in it, are called-forth in all their Bloom and Glory. — In like Manner, the Praise and Admiration of God lets our Faculties upon their full Stretch, and improves them to all the Degrees of Perfection of which they are capable. But,

Thirdly, It further promotes in us an exquisite Sense of God's Honour, and an high Indignation of Mind at every thing that openly prophanes it. For, What we value and delight-in, we cannot with Patience, hear slighted or abused. — Our own Praise, which we are constantly putting-up, will be an Excitement to us towards procuring and promoting the Divine Glory in every other Instance ; and will make us set our Faces against all open and avowed Impieties.

Tainly to hear God's Name and Worship vilified by others, is no very good Argument that we have been used to honour and reverence him in good Earnest ourselves. Again,

Fourthly

Fourthly, It will, (besides all this,) work in us a deep Humility and Consciousness of our own Imperfections.

Upon frequent Attention to God, and his Attributes, we shall easily discover our own Weakness and Unworthiness. - By comparing these with those we shall "learn not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly."

The vast Distance we are at from real and infinite Worth will astonish us so much, that we shall not be tempted to value ourselves upon those lesser Degrees of Pre-eminence, which Custom or Opinion, or some little accidental Advantages have given us over other Men. But,

Lastly, The last Use I shall make of the Doctrine before us, is, that a conscientious Praise of God will keep us back from all false Praises, from all mean and servile Flatteries, too commonly in Use among Men.

Praising, with us, is nothing else but the Trial of our Skill, how many Good Things we can say of others, All the Treasures of Oratory are exhausted, with all the possible fine Things, whether just, applicable, or not. But surely, He who hath a deep Sense of the Excellencies of God, upon his Mouth, will not make God of any thing else.

Upon

Upon these Grounds doth the Duty of Praise stand, and these are the Obligations that bind us to the Performance of it,

It is the End of our Being, and the very Rule and Law of our Nature, flowing from the two great Fountains of human Action, the Understanding and the Will, naturally and almost necessarily. - It is the most excellent Part of our religious Worship, enduring to Eternity, after the Rest shall be done-away; and paid even now in the frankest Manner, with the least Regard to our own Interest. It recommends itself to us by several peculiar Properties and Advantages; as it carries more Pleasure in it than all other Kinds of Devotion; - as it enlarges and exalts the several Powers of the Mind; - as it breeds in us an exquisite Sense of God's Honour, and a Willingness to promote it in the World; - as it teaches us to be humble and lowly Ourselves; and yet preserves us from base and sordid Flattery, from bestowing mean and undue Praises on Others.

These are the Reasons which the holy Writers may well be supposed to have in view, when they call upon us to "to praise God," and assert that "it is a good thing to sing praises unto him;" and command us to "give Thanks always for all things to God." *It thanketh him, and to give him his glory here.*

I shall Conclude this Subject with a short Application to Two Sorts of Persons, the Careless, & the Prophane. - The First of which neglects the Practice of this important Duty; - and the Other lives in an open Disgrace of it. And,

First, A Neglect in this Case doth certainly involve in it a very high Degree of Guilt and Folly; for, it is, (we see,) the Neglect of our Duty and Honour, our Interest and our Pleasure, at once and together. - It is to omit the doing That which we were purposedly sent into the World to do; and without doing of which, all the other Affairs of Life are but only continued Impertinences: That which we have so many Obligations to do, & no Excuse for leaving undone, since Praise is within every Man's Reach, and there is no one but hath it in his Power to be thankful.

God commandeth the Jews to acknowledge his Sovereignty and Beneficence by Sacrifices, a costly and troublesome Way of Worship. But, of Us, he requires only the easy & unexpensive Offering of our Thanks and Praises: - And I Shall we not pay it?

Alas! We do not! Every thing proves an Hindrance to us in the Way to this our bounden Duty and Service; we are too-idle, or too-hasty to attend upon it; and even when we find Leisure for it, how cold

cold & insensible are we? Let us call to Mind what the great Teacher of Thanksgiving exhorts us to by his own Practice: who, when performing this holy Office, summons-up all his Faculties to assist him in it; "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, & All that is within me; bless his Holy Name." It is a Work that will employ All that is within us, will call-for all the Application, and Warmth, & Strength that we can possibly bestow upon it. - Cold and languid Praise is no Praise; This Sacrifice can be no longer acceptable, than whilst it is ~~BURNING~~ ^{ON} ~~WITH~~ ^{WITH} VIBULATING
AS IT SHALL DO ANXIOUSLY ~~WITH~~ ^{TO} THE DUTY TO WHICH
As to Those who live in the Contempt of this Duty, they are generally such as pretend a high Sense of the Dignity of human Nature, and bear no small Respect to their own Understandings. Now,

The other Parts of Religious Worship happen to be too mean & low for such great Minds to take-up with; yet This, doubtless, might deserve to be thought EQUAL to them. — Let Confession & Prayer be as much beneath them as they imagine; yet surely, Praise hath something in it so great and noble, as may invite them to practice it. — It is a Subject fit for the most enlarged Capacities to dwell-on; and such a one, as even these would certainly find themselves raised and improved by. But alack! We
bico speak

speak in vain. - The Men who are bold enough to slight a Duty of this Rank and Character, will easily slight every thing that can be offered to bring them to it. - All we can say to them is, that as God made them for his Glory, so he will certainly serve the Ends of that Glory upon them one Way or other; And, therefore, - If they will not freely praise him for his Goodness in this World, they shall surely, (whether they will or no,) contribute to the Praise of his Justice hereafter.

Sermon

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of God.

Cor. x 31. "Whether ye eat or drink, or what-
soever ye do, Do all to the Glory of God."

The Design of the Apostle in this Chapter, is to press upon Christians the great Obligation they are under, to walk "worthy of their holy Vocation;" to walk "worthy of God," as he elsewhere expresses it, (i.e) to live as becometh "the Gospel of Christ;" to behave themselves in such a Manner, as may do Honour to their Religion, and give Credit and Reputation to their Profession; In a Word, that they be sollicitous above all things to promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men; to bring over Unbelievers, to the Acknowledgment of the Truth; and to prevent, (as far as possible,) those who do believe, from being in any Manner offended and discouraged in their Duty, or by any Means tempted and seduced into Sin.

An End this, which, in all our Great and Reli-

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gious Actions, we ought always actually and directly perform; and all our smaller and indifferent Actions, by a general and habitual Intention, are to have the same Tendency. For so the Apostle concludes his Discourse, in the Words before us; "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do All to the Glory of God;"

Which Words contain a Doctrine of the highest Importance in Religion; And, therefore, in the following Discourse upon them, I shall more largely and distinctly consider;

First. What is the true Meaning, and full Intent of this Phrase, which we so often meet-with in Scripture, "The Glory of God."

II. What is required of Men in Practice, in Order to their satisfying this Precept.

III. The Importance of this upon Common Life in general; Which gives the most frequent and best Opportunities for it; And,

Lastly, That without This, we have no true Religion, nor can be fit for the Enjoyment of God.

As to the true Meaning of this Phrase, so often met-with in Scripture, "The Glory of God;" it is to be observed, that there is a great Difference betwixt

Serm. LIV.

First

212 Of doing all Things to the Glory of God.

First and original Signification of it, is to denote to us the Essence, the Person, or the Majesty of God; that is, God himself, who is the Fountain of Glory; Thus in the 2d. of St. Peter "There came to him, (to our Saviour at his Baptism,) such a Voice from the Excellent Glory: "(i.e.) from God, this Father; as 'tis literally expressed; in the very same Verse In This Sense, "the Name of God," the "Majesty on High," and some other such Phrases, are also used in like Manner, to signify God HIMSELF. And, "sitting on the right hand of Power," (as recorded in St. Matt.) is, sitting at the Right-Hand of God, Who Alone has properly "All Power." But,

Secondly, This Phrase, "the Glory of God," signifies also the Manifestation of God's Perfections or Attributes, by the external Exercise of them towards his Creatures.

In God, was essentially before anything was created, in the Enjoyment of his own Unspeakable Perfections: But the Manifestation of the Glory of those Perfections, and the Communication of Good to Others, could not be till the Creation of Things. Hence the Prophet Isaiah represents God speaking thus, "I have created him for my Glory." — In Al-
lusion to which Expression it may probably be supposed, that St. Paul says, that "Man is the Image

and Glory of God." And,

Because in every one of the divine Perfections in particular, when manifested singly in their proper and respective Act, there is something distinctly worthy of Adoration and Praise; it is, therefore, frequent in Scripture, to express any One of those Perfections singly, by the Title of "the Glory of God." Thus concerning the Divine Power, "The Heavens declare the Glory of God," (that is, they show forth unto Men, the Power of God in CREATING, and his Wisdom in DISPOSING things;) "and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-Work." And, our Lord, (speaking of the Sickness of Lazarus,) saith, "This Sickness is not unto Death, but for the Glory of God;" - that "thou shouldst see the Glory of God;" - "and that the Son of God might be Glorified thereby;" The Meaning is; It was intended for a Manifestation of God's Power to raise the Dead, and of his having communicated That Power also, to the "Son of Man." And here,

We may observe, by the Way, that the Tyranny, indeed, of weak and vain Mortals, is apt to take Pleasure in Power for Power's Sake; and their great Complacency and Glory is, in being able to exercise it arbitrarily and without Reason. But God, whose Power is truly infinite, makes it His Glory to exert

cise Power, in doing Good; (for almost all our Saviour's Miracles, were Acts of Beneficence, as well as of Power; or at least, if the Subject is not capable of Good, yet the Exercise of his Power, even in Acts of Severity, is always according to Justice; as, "What if God, - willing to make his Power known, endured with much Long-Suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction?" He did not show his absolute Power, in fitting a certain Number of Men to Destruction; (as Some have absurdly understood this Text, directly contrary to the Words themselves;) but he showed his Power in justly punishing Those, who after much Long-Suffering and Forbearance with them, appeared finally fit for nothing but Destruction. Again:

Because Mercy and Goodness are represented in Scripture, as the Attributes wherein God chiefly delights; according to that of St. James, "Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment;" or, as it is in the Original, " Mercy glorieth over Judgment :" therefore, This also is, in a particular and emphatical Manner, called "the Glory of God." "That he might make known the Riches of his Glory, on the Vessels of Mercy :" And " That he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit in the INNER-MAN."

In Pursuance of which same Manner of speaking; "Grace" or "Mercy," is by the Evangelist called likewise the Glory of Christ; "We beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace, (that is, of Mercy,) & Truth;" And even of a MAN, "It is his Glory, (saith Solomon,) to pass over a Transgression." And the Thanks which Men are bound to return to God for his free Goodness and Compassion towards them, is accordingly expressed to be "to the Praise of his Glory." In this particular Sense, is sometimes meant That general Observation, that the End to which God directs All his Actions, is his Own Glory; "God hath concluded All under Sin, that he might have Mercy upon All."

Thus God's manifesting the several Attributes and Perfections of his Divine Nature, in the external Exercise of them towards his Creatures, is frequently what the Scripture means by the "Glory of God." 3dly, From hence, (on the other Side,) the Return or Acknowledgment, which Creatures make again to God, for the Manifestations of his Goodness to Them, is likewise, in Scripture, styled "The Glory of God," or "Their giving Glory to Him."

To "give Glory to God," is to promote his Honour

Honour in the World, or to contribute what we can towards keeping up in All Men a just Sense of him, and Regard towards him. And, ~~and always~~

This is done, particularly; by Worshipping him, with constant and perpetually-repeating Acts of Solemn publick Devotion, & giving unto the Lord, the GLORY due unto his Name; & "Worshiping the Lord, in the Beauty of Holiness." Thus the Saints in Heaven, are represented as worshipping God, ascribing all Glory and Honour & Power to him; And the Nations of the Earth are accordingly directed to Fear God, & give Glory to him. Which Worship because the Heathen World gave to Others instead of the True God, St. Paul charges them, that "when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God." Again, ~~it will be seen~~ The Honour of God is promoted among Men, or Glory given unto him; when we particularly thank him for Mercies & Benefits received; thereby professing our Sense of God's being the Author of those Blessings: Thus, when of the ten Lepers that were healed, one only, (who was a Samaritan,) was truly Thankful for the Mercy shown him; "There are not found, (says our Saviour,) that returned to give GLORY to God, save this Stranger."

But further, Glory is in like Manner said to be given

given to God, by Acknowledgment of his Government and Supreme Dominion in the World: Thus in the Rev. when great Judgments fell upon the idolatrous World, "the Remnant, (says the Text,) were affrighted, & gave Glory to the God of Heaven;" (i.e) they then acknowledged the True God to be, indeed, the Supreme Governor of the World. For not acknowledging of which, but proudly assuming to himself the Cause of his own Grandeur and Riches, King Belshazzar was reproved by the Prophet. And Herod, "because he gave not God the Glory;" (i.e) because forgetting his Dependence upon God, he suffered the People to applaud him as being himself a God, and the Author of his own Greatness,

Upon the same Ground, Confession of past Sins, with true Humiliation, and a just Sense of the Unworthiness and Ungratefulness of Sin; is in Scripture styled "giving Glory to God." In this Sense Joshua bid to Achan, (who had stolen some of the accursed things, & indeavoured to dissemble it;) "My Son, I pray thee, give Glory to the Lord God of Israel, & make Confession unto him" (i.e) acknowledge, that nothing can be concealed from His all-seeing Eye; and that "to Him there is no Secret nor Shadow of Darkness, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves." Again, Serm. LIV. Actual

Actual Repentance, and Forsaking of Sin, by real Amendment, is still, in a higher degree, "giving Glory to God," or promoting his Honour.

Again, Habitual Holiness, or a constant established Practise of Virtue, in the Course of our Lives, is yet further, in the highest Degree we are capable, "giving Glory to the God" of all Righteousness and Holiness, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; hereby "glorifying God, in our Body and in our Spirit which are his: Being filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory and Praise of God." In a Word;

Whatever tends to the true Honour of Religion, to the promoting the Establishment of Virtue and Goodness among Men; "Whatsoever things are true, - honest, - just, - lovely, or of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise; these are the things which promote the Glory of God."

God, is himself a Being of infinite Holiness and Goodness; a perfectly just and righteous, as well as Supreme, Governor of the Universe: And the Glory of such a Governor, is the Establishment of his Moral-Kingdom, the universal Establishment of the Dominion and Power of Virtue, in the Wills of all reasonable and intelligent Creatures. His NATURAL Kingdom

Kingdom, is by Necessity; for the material World cannot but obey him; But his MORAL Kingdom, which is His greatest Glory, is the Dominion of Rightcounsel and Virtue. Hence the Apostles, in their Exhortations to the Practice of Any Virtue whatever, frequently urge This Argument, that it will be "to the Glory of God;" as in the Words before us, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God;" (i.e.) Do every thing, even the most common actions of life, in such a manner, as may become the Professors of the Gospel of Christ, and may promote the Honour & Interest of Religion.

The Words are of the same Import, with those in the Col. "Whatever ye do in Word or Deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus;" do every thing so as becomes the Disciples of Christ, "giving Thanks to God, even the Father, by Him; that God in all things may be GLORIFIED through Jesus Christ," or, as 'tis elsewhere expressed, that "ye may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (i.e.) by our Practice to cause it to appear joyely and beneficial to Mankind, to shew how glorious it is in its effects, and how worthy to be embraced and practised by all Men. This is what the Scripture else where calls, "glorifying the word of the Lord;" (i.e.) causing

causing it to have its free Course ; 'Tis promoting the Interest of Religion and Virtue and the general Salvation of Men ; 'Tis spreading the Knowledge of God , and bringing Men over to the Obedience of his Commands , in Order to their becoming capable of being Partakers of his Happiness . — Which Happiness and Perfection of rational Creatures, being the great End and Design of God's Creation, what both Nature and Scripture calls the Kingdom of God ; therefore, whatever tends to the promoting of Virtue and True Religion in the World , is promoting the Honour and the Glory of God .

When Many of the Jews , (convinced by our Saviour's Miracles ,) embraced the Truth of his Doctrine; the Scripture thus expresses it, that "they glorified the God of Israel ." When our Saviour Promised his Disciples , for the further Confirmation and Establishment of their Faith , that God would certainly grant them the Petitions they should rightly put-up in his Name ; he does it in the following Manner , "that the Father , (says he,) may be GLORIFIED in the Son ." And , because the Testimony and the Sufferings of the Martyrs , are one of the principle Means of propagating the True Religion ; therefore , our Saviour's foretelling in what Manner St. Peter should die , is by the Evangelist

thus expect, that our Lord, "signified by what Death Peter should shew his God." For the same Reason, the Spreading of the Knowledge of the True God, among the Nations of the World, is by the Prophet called, "setting his Glory among the Heathen." And because Nothing does this more effectually, than the virtuous Lives and good Examples of those who profess the Truth; therefore, the Apostle tells the Corinthians, that "the abundant Grace which was in them, did thro' the Thanksgiving of Many, resound to the Glory of God." And our Saviour, exhorting his Disciples to be bright Examples of Virtue to the World, does it in this Manner, "Let your Light, so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and GLORIFY your Father which is in Heaven."

All that has been said upon this Head, concerning the "Glory of God," is still further confirmed by the Consideration of the Contrary, what is meant by the Dishonour of God. Literally and strictly speaking, 'tis evident God cannot be dishonoured, because his essential Honour or Glory is IMMORTAL. But, as the promoting of Virtue and Righteousness, is glorifying God; so the bringing any reproach upon Religion & Goodness, is dishonouring of God, who is the Author of all Religion and

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the

the Fountain of Goodness. Thus, under the Old Testament, the Wickedness of Eli's Sons, caused "Men to abhor the Offering of the Lord." And the Sin of David, gave "great Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." Upon This Ground, Nehemiah thus exhorts the Jews at their Return from the Captivity, "Ought ye not, (lays he,) to walk in the Fear of our God, because of the Reproach of the Heathen our Enemies?" And God complains by the Prophet Isaiah "They that rule over my People, oppress them, and my Name continually every Day is blasphemed." And again, by Ezekiel, "When they entred unto the Heathen whither they went, they profaned my Holy Name, when they said, These are the People of the Lord."

In the New Testament, the same Argument is urged by St. Paul, "Through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through You, as it is written." And in his particular Directions to Persons in particular Stations, his Exhortation to young Women, is, "that by sober Conversation they give none Occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully," and "that they be chaste & discreet, that the Word of God be not blasphemed;" And to young Men, "that by their Un corrupted Gravity

and Sincerity, "that that is of the contrary Part may be alienated; having no Evil thing to say of them." And to Servants, that they behave themselves well towards their Masters, "that the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphemed."

Having thus explained what is, in the Scripture, meant by this Phrase, The "Glory of God," and our "giving Glory to him," I proceed,

II. To consider distinctly and particularly, in the several Cases and Circumstances of Life, what it is that is required of Men in Practice, in Order to their satisfying this Precept in the Text; "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, Do all to the Glory of God." And,

First, He who will in all things promote the Glory of God, must in the First Place show-forth the Sense he has of God upon his Mind, by Acts immediately and directly Religious; by such Acts, as are Professed Acknowledgments of our own Dependence upon God, and exemplary to provoke other Men, (as the Apostle elegantly expresses it,) "unto love and ~~to~~ good Works." — Of This Kind, are publick Prayer & Thanksgiving. By this Worship of God, we make the properst Expressions of the sense we have of our Dependence upon him; and by

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this Manner of expressing it, is That Sense itself, the Sense of God and of Religion upon the Minds of Men, most effectually kept up and preserved. Very emphatical is the Description St. John gives us, in the Rev. (a) of the whole Universe joining in their several Capacities, to give Glory in This Manner to their Common Lord. But,

Secondly, He who, according to the Direction in the Text, will "do all things to the Glory of God;" as he must be constant in Acts immediately & directly RELIGIOUS, so he must resolve against being at any Time guilty of any Action which is directly irreligious. — Of This Kind, is every deliberate Sin, every Act which is against a Man's own Conscience, every known Transgression of a Commandment. Which things, whosoever is in any Time guilty of, far from "doing all to the Glory of God," he, on the contrary, (as much as in him lies,) dishonours and reproaches him. For wilful Sin, sinning "presumptuously or with a high Hand," (as the Scripture expresses it;) is, in the Nature of Things, a Dishonour to God: "Thou that makest thy Boast of the Law, through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God?" 'Tis reproaching the Lord; contending, in Effect, that his Commandments are not wise, just, &c.

(A) Rev. v. 13. &c.

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and good : 'Tis casting a Contempt upon his Laws and professing that we know better what is Right and Fit for Ourselves, than He can judge for us & therefore, that "we will not have Him to reign over us." — This is the Case of presumptuous Sins ; of all Actions , known to be directly, and in their own Nature IRRELIGIOUS. But,

Not only by Actions intrinsically and in their own Nature immortal , is God dishonoured ; but also by every Thing, which in its Circumstances , is Evil ; by every Act , which either the Person who commits it, judges to be unlawful ; or which necessarily gives Offence to Others ; & becomes to Them the Cause or the Occasion of Sin. For, the Kingdom of God consisting in the Prevalency of universal Righteousness, Sincerity, and Truth ; it follows, that not only by the Practice of whatever is intrinsically immortal , but also by whatever wounds and defiles the Conscience either of him who does the Action, or of Others, who by the Example of it are led into the Commission of what to Them is Sin ; by every such thing is God's Kingdom of Righteousness diminished , and the Dominion of Virtue over the Hearts and Wills of Men , (which is the Glory and the Delight of God,) is weakened & impaired. For whosoever does any thing with a Sence
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or Judgment in his own Mind, of its being unlawful when he does it; however otherwise the Act might possibly have been innocent in its own Nature; yet he sins at That Time against his own Conscience, and consequently against God. And whoever does any thing with a probable Knowledge or Expectation, that his doing it will be a Means of deceiving or tempting his Neighbour into Sin; however otherwise the Action might have been not only innocent in itself, but innocent also to Him, because he knows it to be so; yet in This Case, by Uncharitableness, he sins against his Brother, and consequently against God. For, since the promoting of Virtue and Goodness in the World, is the most important of all things; it becomes us at all Times, and in all our Actions, to look upon it as our main End. And though the Perverseness of malicious Persons, who are apt to misrepresent things, is by no Means an Obligation upon any Good Man, to forbear doing any thing that he himself knows to be innocent; yet the Weakness of sincere and well-meaning Persons, who by relying upon His Example, might be led to do what would in Them be Sin, is a strong Reason, in Point of Charity, (unless he has otherwise some great Occasion or Necessity of Acting,) why he should forbear doing that which

would be so hurtful to Them. Where the thing that gives Offence to Others, and either compels or leads them into Sin, is such as not only upon Account of this Circumstance or Consequence, but intrinsically also and in its own Nature is unlawfull; there the Scripture denounces against the Offender the utmost Severity of Woe, as against a presumptuous Dishonour of God. But,

Where the Thing, done is innocent in itself, and only by accidental Consequence proves an Occasion of Sin to Others; yet even There, he who fore-sees this Consequence, and takes not Care to prevent it; is in Scripture charged with Uncharitableness towards the Soul of his Brother, if it be a Fellow-Christian whom he so causes to offend; or with Want of true Concern for the "Glory of God," if the Offence be given to an Unbeliever.

As to the Case of Unbelievers; the Apostles thus exhort, "Have your Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that they may, by your good Works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation." Again, "Provide Things honest, not only in the Sight of the Lord, but also in the Sight of all Men." "Abstain from all Appearance of Evil," "Walk honestly towards whomsoever are without."

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As to the Case of Fellow-Christians ; how the Glory of God is to be promoted , by our Behaviour towards Them ; by our taking Care to avoid even such innocent things, as we see likely to lead any of Them into Sin, and may be forborn without any great Inconvenience to Ourselves ; the Apostle explains himself at large, by putting a particular and very remarkable Instance, in the Chapter before us, as well as in other Places (A)

The Sum of all, therefore, is This : — To do any Evil Action, that Good may come of it, is not lawful : But to forbear any innocent Action, when such Forbearance is the likeliest Means to prevent another Man's falling into Sin, is both lawful & commendable. Upon the Whole,

Whoever is sincerely desirous to do all things to the Glory of God ; as he will be heartily sorry for all his own Sins and Offences, so he will really endeavour, as much as in him lies, to prevent the Sins of Others ; He will avoid every thing, that may lead them into Sin ; he will set them an Example of Virtue, in the Practice of his own Life ; he will recommend to them in his Discourse, (upon all fair and proper occasions) the most excellent

(A) See the 8th Chapter of this Epistle ; and the 14th Chapter to the Romans.

proper Occasions,) the Excellency and the Reasonableness of Religion; he will rejoice and be truly pleased to see Virtue, Righteousness, and universal Charity, and Good-Will prevail and prosper in the World; he will lead no Man into Error, nor be easy to see any Man continue in it; but will wish, with Moses, that all the Lord's People were Prophets; and contribute, as much as in him lies, towards enabling them to be so. But further,

III. In all great Actions of Moment and Consequence in the main Course of a Man's Life; although they be not such, as have any direct Relation to Religion; yet ought he expressly to intend the Glory of God, as his chief and main End. He ought to intend the "Glory of God," (i.e.) the promoting of Truth and Right, of Justice and Goodness in the World. For, whatever is THEREFORE chosen, because it tends to the promoting of Virtue & Goodness; is, (in the Scripture-sense,) done "for the Glory of God." And whatever is for That Reason avoided, because it has, in any Manner, a Tendency to Evil; is avoided "for the Glory of God."

Now, There is no considerable Action in any Man's Life, no Action of Consequence and Importance in the World; but which, even though it has not any direct Relation to Religion, yet, some Way

or other, has in the Whole, a Tendency to promote the Cause either of Virtue or of Vice. Such for Instance, are our different Professions & Employments, or Manner of Life in the World, & even the Possessing of Worldly things themselves; which must Always be desired, with due Subordination to the Interest of Virtue; which is the Glory of God, and the only true and final Happiness of Men. Whoever, in the Great Lines & main Course of his Life, aims merely or principally at worldly and temporal Ends; in the Attainment of those Ends, he "has his Reward." But,

IV.

As in all **GREAT Actions**, a good Christian ought actually; so in all, even the **SMALLEST & most inconsiderable Actions of Life**; he ought habitually to intend "the Glory of God." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, Do all to the Glory of God." — The Scripture represents all, even **IRRATIONAL** and the very inanimate Creatures, as glorifying God, because they act regularly, according to the Nature He has given them, and by his Command. Much more then, may even the most common Actions of Men, be justly said to be "done to the Glory of God," when they are done "decently, soberly, regularly and innocently;" as becomes Men, & Christians, & such as have upon their Minds

how properly promoted.

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even when they are not directly thinking of it, an habitual REGARDING GOD AND RELIGION.

In the Course of a religious Life, to a Man truly and sincerely Virtuous, every Action of his Life promotes the Honour of Religion, which is the Glory of God; and every thing he does, is sanctified by a Habit of Virtue: His worldly Business & Employment, by Justice and Charity running uniformly through all the Parts of it; The common Actions of his Life, by decency & inoffensiveness; His very Pleasures and Diversions, by Innocency and right Intention. In a Word; whatsoever he is doing, he will Always habitually "remember the End, and therefore, never does amiss."

Sermon

SERMON LVI.

On the same Subject.

I Cor. x. 31. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsover ye do; Do all to the Glory of God."

Having already shown, from the Words before us, what we are to understand by "The Glory of God," in its several Views; and by what Means it is best promoted: I shall now, (according to the Method already proposed,) proceed,

III. To show the Importance of this upon Common Life in general, which affords the most frequent and best Opportunities for it.

Religion, considered in its just Extent, contains two Sorts of Duties; the Duties of Piety, and those which regard the Actions of the NATURAL and SOCIAL Life.

Both are essential to it; but Men shew a strong Propensity to consider the FORMER as unconnected with Life, and the LATTER as unconnected with Religion, and, by a Misconception of both Sorts equally,

equally, tho in different Respects, to disunite Religion from the Occupations of COMMON Life; It proceeds from a partial View of both, these; and it tends to render our Practice of both defective.

I have, therefore, purposedly designed, (under these Words,) to show the Importance of this Principle upon Common Life in general; which gives the most frequent & best Opportunities for it.

And here, Whatever be our separate Callings; The Importance of Religion, (by which is meant a due Faith and Fear of God in our Hearts, and the having Respect to him in all Things,) will not retard or impede us in them; It will only restrain us from forced and unnatural Exertions; - it will be no Hindrance to our regular Motions, but only prevent their running into distorted and convulsive Agitations; - it will not destroy that Eagerness which gives Spirit and Perseverance to our Endeavours; but only extinguish that Anxiety, Solitude and Carefulness, which, while they make us neglect ETERNAL Things, often render us, at the same Time, incapable of pursuing PRESENT Things in the most effectual Manner, and create immediate Vexation of Spirit, for which no Success can make-amends.

In a Word, a due Regard to Religion, to "the Glory of God in all things," when really carried thro

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Life

Life, and acted-upon, will not-only sanctify our Industry, and render it conducive to our FUTURE Happiness, while it continues as subservient as ever, or really more so, to our PRESENT Interest. Again,

We are so formed as to be capable of Enjoyment in those earthly things which we possess. God doth not contradict our Condition by his Laws; He doth not require us to become insensible even to the lowest Pleasures. All Men eat and drink; they are among the most common Actions of our Lives; yet Religion is concerned in them.

If, in "eating and drinking," we are luxurious and intemperate, we hurt our Souls by it: but, if we eat and drink TEMPERATLY; not repining for the Pleasures which we have not, nor abusing those which we HAVE, then we serve God in every Act of Refreshment, and by the same, nourish our Souls and Bodies together. Again,

It is a Duty we owe to ourselves to preserve Sobriety of Mind, Composure of Spirit, and Freedom from all violent Passions. Now,

In the ORDINARY Employments of Life it is, that we find Temptations to discompose us; It is only, therefore, by maintaining it amidst all the Occurrences of common Life, and Tumults of Business, that we can obey those divine Precepts which enjoin

it. — Are we engaged in the Pursuit of some considerable Advantage, we have now, (in this,) an Opportunity of curbing the Violence of our Desires, which will prepare us for that happy State, from whence Malice and Faction will be secluded.

In the Course of our Occupations we many times meet with unexpected Incidents and Perplexities, and we are called upon, not to be discomposed by them; Now, if we are NOT, this will be a Preparation for the Superior Regions of perfect Serenity and Peace, at the same time that it prevents present Uneasiness, & even fits us for the most proper Management of our worldly Business. Again,

In this World, Objects frequently occur, which tend to draw us from the Path of Life. They meet us in the Scenes of Business, & the Hours of Relaxation & Amusement, in Company, in Solitude; in every Situation.

Now, continual Circumspection and Watchfulness against their seducing us into Sin, is a Duty we are bound to; and is what we must put in Practice every Day, and every Hour, in every Place, and Condition; else we cannot persist steadfastly in the NARROW Way that leads to Heaven. But further,

As this Principle is of so great Importance in Common Life, so in the ORDINARY Business of our Lives
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we shall find the most frequent and best Opportunities of performing it. And,

Religion requires us to embrace these Opportunities, and by performing them, we serve God, and please him, and contribute, of Course, to the Salvation of our Souls.

Do we spend the Day in the Business of our Calling, (whatever it is,) we must carry our Religion with us, and exert it in our Employments. We may do our Work either honestly, or dishonestly. If we deceive those with whom we deal, or defraud, or injure them, we trespass against our Souls, & by these Ways move forward to Destruction. But,

If, in every Part of our Business, without Exception, we act justly, & deal with Integrity and Faithfulness, we THEN walk before the Lord, while we seem to be only busy in our worldly Calling ; and advance towards Heaven, while we seem only to be busy in the Circle of this present Life. The several Occupations of which , (whatever they are , or our Lot in them,) form the only Theatre on which the Virtues of Justice and Fidelity, Honesty and Uprightness, can be practised. And, without constantly practising them, we can have no Religion.

These Virtues tend to secure the Confidence of Men, and promote our worldly Prosperity ; and, by

the uniform Practice of them, we likewise "lay-up for ourselves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth, nor Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break-thro, nor steal." Again,

In the Train of Life, in the Intercourse of Society & Business, a Person may do us an undesigned Harm, or an intended Injury. Now,

This is the Time when we have it in our Power to exercise, (and by exercising to improve,) the great Virtues of Patience, Meekness, and Forbearance, of Kindness and Forgiveness. And, it is only by exercising them in such Circumstances, & making them run thro all the Actions to which such Circumstances give Occasion, that we can show ourselves to "be Children of the Most-Highest," and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

If, on the contrary, we indulge ourselves at these times, in Bitterness, in Anger, in Wrath, in Malice or Revenge; — If we give-way to the Expressions of these Dispositions, in our Communications in Company, or Connexions in Life, we show ourselves to be alienated from the gentle Spirit of true Religion, and, of Course, render ourselves fit for the Society of those fallen Angels, in whom malevolent Passions reign. Again,

Do we go into Company, do we enter into Conversation

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Vetation, where the Characters & Conduct of others too generally become the Topicks of Discourse?

This is the Situation in which we are called upon to make candid and favourable Constructions, to vindicate aspersed Innocence, to clear up misconstrued Virtues, to apologize for exaggerated Failings, and to "speak the Truth in Love."

We have Opportunities for these Duties every Day, and the Discharge of them is essential and important Parts of Religion.

If, therefore, instead of performing them, we, in our gayest Meeting, and most unreserved Talk, defame, slander, or revile, We need make no Pretensions to true Religion. For, "he that brideth not his Tongue but deceiveth his own Heart, that Man's Religion is Vain." Again,

In the Course of our Employments, by the Events which cast up the Train of our ordinary Business, we have Opportunities of returning Good to our Benefactors, - of doing Services to those who have done us Evil, - of supplying the Wants of the Poor, by employing them, or by other Means which are in our Way; - of supporting the Friendless, - of bringing-forward concealed Merit, or of doing some Other good Office to those about us, far distant, or near to us. Different Employments, and different

States

States in Life, afford different Means of doing good; but every Employment, and every State, afford some Means, and some Opportunities. And, it is a great Part of the Duty which God requires of us to embrace and improve them, thereby laying up in Store for ourselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal Life."

I cannot mention particularly all the Ways in which true Holiness will enter into Life, and exert itself towards others, in all the varied Scenes and complicated Situations which happen in the Course of all the different States of Life. And therefore,

In Addition, to the Instances already given, I shall only observe, in general, that every Act of proper Behaviour, which we show as Parents, or Children, as Masters or Servants, or as belonging to any particular Occupation or Profession, or as we are placed in a particular Relation; Each, and every One of these is a real Act of Holiness, well-pleasing to God, and conducive to our eternal Happiness. As,

On the other Hand, every Instance of improper Behaviour in any of these Situations or Relations, displeases God, and retarded our Progress to Heaven.

When we contemplate Religion as thus concerned
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in our world Behaviour towards others, as either observed or violated in all our Social Actions; How Sensitive does it appear to us? & How uninter-
mitting are our Opposites for it! And how con-
stantly therefore, should our Attention to it be in
sin WEAKNESS. We too often neglect, or transgress its
Obligations, when we imagine our Actions perfect-
ely indifferent, and as removed wholly out of the
Province of Religion. But,

III. We must carry Piety along with us thro the
whole Course of Lives, else we can have no true
Religion, nor can be fit for the Enjoyment of God.

We may acquire some lively Impressions of God,
in Retirement, or in the Ordinances of Worship;
but, if these Impressions do not remain with us, and
actuate us, when we enter into the World, and all
the Time we are conversant in it, they are of no
Moment.

Religious Affections may be nourished in the Re-
treats of Devotion; but, it is in the Field of Life,
and by being introduced into its several Occupa-
tions, that the religious Affections obtain and display
Strength, Firmness & Energy. It is in the WORLD
they are put to the Trial, as there only it is, that we
find Opportunities for exerting them; and it is, by
being exerted THERE, that they are improved into a
com-

without it, there can be no Religion.

commanding Temper of Piety.

There is no Situation in Life, which does not give Scope for some Exercise of Godliness, & which requires it not, if we would not be wanting to our Duty.

Piety, or a Regard to God, is a vital Spirit which may be ought to run through all the Virtues which respect either Ourselves or Others, to animate and direct them. It is not excluded from any Place or Condition which admits any Virtue whatever. It cannot be dispensed with from either, but is must lose much of its Value and Lustre, if got by whollar extinct. Again,

Love to God is an Affection which does not spend itself in silent Admiration, or warm Feelings only; No, it is fit to enter into Life, and to be conversant in it. It does not display itself so much, nor ascertain its Sincerity and Ardour so unexceptionably, by any Emotions inwardly felt, or by any Raptures of Devotion, as by its Effects upon our Behaviour, by making us delight to obey and please God in every Part of our Conduct; by making us willing to relinquish what we most fondly desire, or to incur what we most of all dread, rather than offend him in committing any Sin, or neglecting any known Duty; by alluring us to the Imitation of all these

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moral

moral Attributes which render God the Object of our Love, and by cherishing Benevolence, & drawing-out our Beneficence to all Men, who are the Children, equally with us, of our Father, which is in Heaven.

Love to God will find Opportunities for some of these Exercises of it, in all our worldly Intercourse, in all the Actions and Events of common Life; And, if any Man neglect these Exercises of it, whenever he finds Opportunities for them " How dwelleth the Love of God in Him?" — It cannot be; his Heart must be void of it, tho' perhaps a Liveliness of Imagination, or a constitutional Warmth of Affection may lead him to presume that his Love to God is ardent. Again,

Reverence of God is not more analogous to the Love of God, in itself, than in its Effects upon our ordinary Conduct.

It is not exercised only when we set ourselves to contemplate and celebrate his Greatness: — We may be, and we ought to be "in the Fear of the Lord all the Day-Long." If we have any Reverence of God, it will shew itself, at all Times, in our most common Behaviour, both in the Silence, and amidst the Temptation of Society — both in the Course of Business, and in the

Reverence of Mankind in every Situation; it will make us "Stand in awe, and Sin not"; - it will prompt us to act in every Manner worthy of the Reverence, the Majesty, and Perfection of God.

Again, Common Life is the acknowledged Sphere of Religion; so the Will of God, which is Purity, exerting itself in Religion, is the great per Rebus; as the only firm Support of many of those Duties to ourselves, the Operation of which thro' the Occurrences of common Life, either has been already delineated, or may easily be traced; Consider, for Instance, amidst the Tumults and Fluctuations of the World, Tranquillity in the Uncertainty of its Prospects, with Contentment and Self-Enjoyment under its Disappointments, & Fortitude in the View of its Dangers.

If these Virtues are separated from Piety, they become languid, and wretched, and die. They must be practised thro' Life; But, they cannot be practised except the Exercises of a plough Temper be woven, as it were, with all the Aera of them, to give them Strength and Excellence.

All the Events of Life are uncertain; — We are often in Adversity, our favourite Schemes are disappointed; our dearest Comforts are taken from us; we become infatuated; our Friends betray us;

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we

If we cannot perform with our own
ourselves in those seasons wherein deriving All
from Piety. This is the Ground on which Grounding
the Principles of Religion, Government and Truth
is laid. Therefore the Scruples which we meet
put forth above Sprightly, have nothing to do with these
Principles, as also nothing to do with the Grounding of
Discontent. And though a man may be guilty of
having a regard to God with respect to his Duties
and Holiness. Against Duties to one's self, the
Piety requires Subjection to the Authority of
God, as well as Submission to his Providence.
A Sense of his Authority will produce a constant
Disposition to obey his Laws; And his Laws are
nothing else, but Rules for the Particulars of our
Behaviour in all the various Circumstances of Hu-
man Life.

There is not a Situation in which we can be placed
that is beyond the Extent of their Direction.
There is not a Situation in which our Conduct will
not be affected by our having a Regard to God's Su-
preme Authority, or by our failing in that Regard.

God is not an unconcerned Spectator of the Be-
haviour of his reasonable Creatures - He trieth their
Hearts, he weigheth all their Actions, & approveth
or disapproveth them, as he sees us perform them.

A Sense of this is a prevailing Respect to his
V.I. Judgement

Judgement, & A Consequence of the Opinions of all the World, when opposed to it, is an important Part of Piety, and a Place of it for exercising which the State of this World gives continual Opportunity.

"In this World we see Vice practised, and hear it justified ; - we find Virtue neglected, and even ridiculed into Ridicule ; - The immediate Pleasures and Advantages of Sin disguise its Horrors, - The present Unpleasantnesses and Inconveniences to which Virtue sometimes exposes Men, eclipse its Beauty ; - Corrupt Fashion seems to alter the Measures of Right and Wrong ; - the promiscuous Distribution of outward Things renders us Inattentive to the opposite Natures, & opposite Consequences of Righteousness and Iniquity."

Such Situations frequently occur in the Train of ordinary Life ; and they give Opportunity for exerting a supreme Regard to the unerring Judgement of God, who can see thro every Disguise, and cannot be imposed upon by the most plausible Pretences, whose " Judgement is always according to Truth."

Now, This Regard is exerted, when, in the whole Tenour of our Lives, we maintain an Abhorrence of all Evil, and the Love of all Goodness, persist invariably in avoiding the One, & pursuing the Other,

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unin-

uninfluenced by the false Opinions of Men, or the irregular Appearances of the World, and valuing only the Approbation of God. Against

Piety leads to the Imitation of God, &c, by all that is enjoined us under THIS, consists in the right Performance of the several Actions of common Life, particularly of the social; It consists in our "loving our Enemies, doing good to them that hate us, blessing them that curse us, praying for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us, - giving to every Man that asketh of us, - and lending, causing no Man to despair." It consists in "putting-away all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-Speaking, with all Malice, and being kind one to another, and walking in Love;"

It consists in "purifying ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh & Spirit," & being holy in all Manner of Conversation: & it is only in the Course of our ordinary Conduct, and amidst the Temptations which occur in Society, that we can have Scope for these Exertions of a god-like Disposition.

In a Word, All the Affections which belong to a Temper of Piety, unite their Force to restrain us from doing Evil, and to excite us to do Good, in all the varied Situations of common Life. Every pious Affection shows itself by suitable Expressions in the

Offices

without it, there can be no Religion.

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Offices of Devotion; but no pious Affection is completed ONLY by these; - There are likewise ACTIVE Exertions of Piety, which run thro the whole of our ordinary Behaviour. Every Regard to God, (in a Manner peculiar to itself,) inclines, or urges us to all the Duties of Life, (i.e.) to the right Performance of all, even our most common Actions.

Devout Persons have often recommended it, as highly beneficial, to mix Acts of immediate Worship, silent Ejaculations of Adoration, &c. with our ordinary Employments; and have justly remarked that, (Unobserved by Men, and without any Interruption to these Employments,) we may find Time and Opportunity for them in the busiest Scenes of Life, and even in our most innocent Amusements.

This is a proper and very advantageous Practice; and "yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way;" Piety may, and ought to be, still more intimately mixed and incorporated with our ordinary Employments; they ought all to be constantly carried-on under the Restraints which Religion imposes, and by the Principles which it inspires. To carry them on in this Manner will be to come-up to the full Import of the Descriptions of a Life of Virtue uniformly pursued under religious Impressions, which the Scripture gives, when it speaks of good Men as

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"setting

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"setting the Lord **ALWAYS** before them" — "acknowledging him in **ALL** their Ways," & "walking before the Lord," and, (in the Words before us,) "doing all things to his Glory." &c

Religion consists not in our withdrawing from the Occupations of the present World; but in our being conversant in them after a virtuous Manner.

Upon the Whole, We are at present in a State of Discipline for Eternity; every Event, every Circumstance of this State gives us an Opportunity for the Practice of some Virtue; and it is by acting virtuously in **EVERY** Circumstance of this State, that we can be improved in Holiness, and become fit for Heaven.

Our commonest Actions are those in which we think Religion least concerned; & on which we are apt to bestow the least Attention; But,

Of our commonest Actions we ought rather to take the greatest Care; for they are most frequently repeated; they will, therefore, form the strongest Habits; - they will **MOST** promote our Improvement and our Happiness, if they be constantly performed **RIGHT**; but they will **MOST** obstruct it, if we indulge ourselves in a Custom of performing them **WRONG**.

The Uses, which may be drawn by Way of Inference

ference from what has been said, are :

First, From hence we may learn how severe a Reproof those Persons justly deserve, who, far from doing ALL things, (as the Apostle directs,) "to the Glory of God;" do, on the contrary, by Profaneness, Unrighteousness &c. directly dishonour Him whom they profess to serve; bringing a Reproach upon our most Holy Religion, and causing the Name of God and the Doctrine of Christ to be, through Their Means, "blasphemed among Unbelievers."

Again, Secondly, Those deserve in the next Place to be rebuked sharply, who, though they do not dishonour God by Acts directly irreligious, yet are careless and negligent in Matters of Religion; not much regarding, whether Truth or Error prevails in the World; nor being sollicitous to do Honour to their Religion, and to promote the spreading of the Doctrine of Christ, by showing the Reasonableness of it, by preserving the Simplicity and Purity of it, and by exhibiting the Beauty of it to all Mankind.

Thirdly, After These, are to be reproved such as have, indeed, a Zeal for Religion, but "not according to Knowledge;" placing the Main Stress of Religion, in Forms and Ceremonies unworthy of God; or in Opinions and Notions, which either through their Obscurity and Unintelligibleness, or by their

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Disagreement to the Everlasting Gospel, to Natural Religion, and to the Divine Perfections, hinder, instead of promoting, "the Glory of God."

4thly, Even the Best of Men have need to be admonished, and to be "put in Remembrance, that they stir up the Gift of God that is in them," that they "cleanse themselves continually from every evil Work, that they may bring forth more Fruit," that they be more and more diligent in all their Actions, so "do every thing to the Glory of God :" Not with a superstitious Anxiety, or burdensome Preciseness, in things of little Moment; but with a cheerful Application of every thing that occurs in Life, to the promoting of Truth and Right, of Reason and Virtue among Men. Rejoicing in the Glory of God, & in the Establishment of his Kingdom of Righteousness ; as That wherein consists the Happiness of the whole Creation , both in This World , and in that which is to come. But,

Lastly, From hence we may learn to comfort and satisfy the Minds of some WEAK Christians; who, not having a right Notion wherein the Glory of God consists, can never assure themselves, that they are TRUE Promoters of it. They read that Moses prayed to God to blot him out of his Book, if thereby

the Children of Israel might be saved ; and that St. Paul even " wished himself accursed from Christ," if thereby the Nation of the Jews could be converted . And hence , Some have put the Question to themselves, and Others have been so weak as to put it in their Writings ; whether a Christian ought to be CONTENT to perish finally, for the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind . But, The Question is absurd and contradictory ; and has no Foundation in the Texts referred to .

Moses , and St. Paul , in the Circumstances they were THEN in , might charitably , and without any Extravagancy , be willing to have born the TEMPORAL Curse then coming upon the Jews , (which is all that their Words mean,) if thereby it could have been possible to have saved the whole Nation .

But , Such high Expressions of Affection, are always well-understood, in all Books, and in all Languages, to have, not a LITERAL, but a FIGURATIVE Meaning .

A Christian's Duty, of " doing all Things to the Glory of God," signifies plainly This only ; That he ought always to prefer the Interest of Religion and Virtue, before all worldly Considerations .

" Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do :
Do ALL to the Glory of God."

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“*Wetlands*” may be
“*Wetland*” or “*Wetlands*”

edit or against his veto." To this Dugald said, "A
good bill, you are I shall be signing," and he signed
the original bill. The bill was then referred to a committee
and, after consideration, withdrawn from the floor.
After the withdrawal of the bill, the reporter
asked Mr. Tammie, "What is the status of the bill?"
He replied, "It is dead."

SERMON LVII

On Imitating the Life of Christ.

Matt. xi. 29. "Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me."

Having already spoken to the Attributes of God at large, with the general Duties flowing from thence; and exhorted to an Imitation of them, as far as the Reach of Finite Creatures, (made after the Image of God,) is capable: We naturally treat of the Life of Christ, the Son of God, as he was a perfect Example of Righteousness to us: and of his Divinity with the Father: And of the Holy Spirit, equal to Both in the Essence of the Divine Nature; and of their Co-Existence in the Eternal and Ever-adorable Trinity, together.

The Words before us confine me, at present, to the first of those (i.e.) The Life of our Saviour Christ as he is a perfect Example of Righteousness to us. "Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me."

The Divine-Nature is the greatest Pattern of Perfection

fection; but, inasmuch as it is too-remote from us, and above our Sight, "no Man having seen God at any Time :" And, though his Perfections are represented to our Minds in some Degree; yet they are so glorious to behold, and so dazzling an Object, that we cannot see them with that Steadfastness with which we ought to eye our Pattern.

God, therefore, hath been pleased to condescend so far to our Weakness as to give us a living, visible Example of those Virtues which he requires of us, in his own Son, (who is the visible Image of the invisible God,) appearing "in the Likeness of sinful Flesh."

Had God sent his Son in great Glory, and in the Form of God, to reveal his Will to us by his absolute Command only; such an extraordinary Revelation, like "the Mountain that burned with Fire," would, indeed, have sufficiently convinced us of the Necessity of Religion, and the Indispensableness of Obedience. But, when this great Person vouchsafed to become, not only the Author of our Religion, But in our own Nature the Pattern also of our Duty; this demonstrated to us, that our Obedience was to be as reasonable, as 'twas indispensable. For by this Means we have a perfect and familiar Example of Holiness and Obedience set before us; by which we plainly

plainly see, that God requires nothing of us, but what our Saviour himself, when he submitted to become Man, did think reasonable to practise.

The Son of God is an Example of equal Perfection with the Father, but much more easy, familiar, & reveal to us; in which we see the several Virtues of a good Life practised to an exalted Degree in every possible Instance. For,

Christ, "the Prince of Righteousness," and "the Fulness of his Father's Glory, & the express Image of his Person," hath not only declared unto us his Father's Will, but "hath finished the Work which was given him to do;" thereby "leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps."

He hath not only "shewn unto us a more excellent Way" than was before discovered, and taught us "the things which belong to our Peace," but hath also given us a lively Demonstration of it, in his own Life and Conversation.

In the Lives of the best of Men, (recorded in Scripture,) we may discern something of Blemish, of Error, and Imperfection; but the Example of our Lord is a Living Law and Rule; his Precepts and Pattern are of equal Perfection; & the Imitation of his Life and Actions is the same as Obedience to his Laws.

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Our

and Our blessed Saviour, therefore, (in whom was hid all the Treasures of Wisdom & Knowledge,) knowing that his Life and Conversation was agreeable to the Will of God, and that he came to "purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works," wisely admonished his Followers to learn of him, as they would thereby be in no Danger of Error, nor Fear of Miscarriage.

"Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls; for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light."

In speaking further to these Words I shall observe the following Method.

First, I shall consider the general Character of our Saviour himself. And then,

II. Instance in some of the many Virtues which were remarkably eminent in his Life, and shew the Extent and Degree in which he exercised them.

Concluding, with exhorting all Men to a Conformity to him, by what Arguments can be produced, both from its Nature and Perfections, its Ease and Advantage. And,

First, Of the general Character of our Blessed Lord and Saviour himself. And here.

At first Sight, it appears that the Character of Jesus Christ is very extraordinary; indeed, quite above Nature in its present State: for, it is absolutely perfect in all moral Respects, and such as we do not at all meet-with in this World. But,

Not only have the Writers of the New-Testament introduced a perfect Character into Life; but they have, from the Accounts they give of our Saviour, as the Only begotten of the Father, raised the Expectation of the Reader to the utmost. This astonishing Character they are to support, with Respect to the Design upon which he came into the World; the Manner in which this Design was executed; & thro a vast Variety of Incidents, and Discourses with such as attended him.

Let us consider these things particularly, with Fairness and Candour. As First,

The sacred Historians evidently set-out on the Foundation of the Old-Testament Prophecies concerning the Messiah, the long expected Saviour and King of the Jews.

Whether these Prophecies appear to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, or not, I'm not now to inquire; or what Nations, the Jews in general, or some particular Persons, might have conceiv'd the Person, who
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Was to be their Messiah. Yet the Reader, from the first Accounts of him, will be surprized with his Being called "Emmanuel," (i.e.) "God with us;" Denomination taken plainly from the Prophet Isaiah.

Here, then, is a Divine Person brought upon the Stage, and the descriptive Characters of him throughout the New-Testament, are suitable to such a Beginning. He is the Son of God; - The Only-Begotten of the Father; standing, therefore, in a Relation to him, in which no other Person ever stood, or possibly can stand. He is represented as "the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person;" - The Name of God is given to him, and creating Power ascribed to him; for "by Him were all things created, whether visible or invisible;" and "by Him God made the Worlds;" - An Authority is given to Him, to which all Things are Subjected, "He only excepted, who did put all things under him."

Such are the Strains in which he is spoken-of in the New Testament. But further,

This Divine Person was to appear in our World in the Form of a Man, and his Generation as a Man was fore-told to be miraculous; conceived & born of a Virgin: His Conception and Birth predicted

.IV. and by

by an Angel, and his Nativity celebrated by a Multitude of the Heavenly Host; and some Persons, directed to him, by the prophetick Spirit, as the Son of David, and the promised Founder of an everlasting Kingdom.— Here is, indeed, an astonishing Combination of most extraordinary Circumstances to raise the Reader's Expectation concerning him.

And, It will be immediately suggested, for what End did this Divine Person come into the World? Surely it must be Something very great and important; — Something worthy of such an astonishing Interposition.

This great Design, the sacred Writers plainly intimate, they did at first mistake. — They looked for a TEMPORAL Prince, who should make the Jewish State great and flourishing, and subdue the Nations to it; — making the Seed of Abraham chief among them, and every Way great & happy. — But when the Counsel of Heaven came to unfold itself, we see quite ANOTHER thing, but unspeakably greater, intended. — The Son of God cometh for the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind; to raise them from the Ruins of Nature, in which thro' the Prevalency of Vice and Superstition, they lay; to restore them from a State of Guile and Condemnation to the Favour of God; to establish a Kingdom of Truth & Righteousness.

Righteousness in the World; a Kingdom worthy of the Son of God, into whose Hands all Authority was committed by the Father; and to collect, as the Subjects of this Kingdom, all the good and worthy of every Nation and Age, into one Body, to whom this great Prince giveth, according to the Counsels of Divine Wisdom & Grace, eternal Life.

This is a Design, which will be acknowledged to be the worthiest and greatest, that could be formed, in which the World above, as well as THIS, is deeply concerned; Principalities & Powers, All things both in Heaven and Earth being subject unto him.

Let us, in the next Place, consider the Circumstances in which this Divine Person was placed, and the Part assigned him to act, in Order to secure the great End for which he came into the World.

And here, The Son of God appears in a Manner, which became him: The Power of the Highest is seen to rest upon him; - from him the Blind receive Sight, - the Lame obtain Health and Soundness, - the Deaf are made to hear, - Lepers are cleansed, - at his Command, Devils are cast-out, - the Dead are raised, - he calmeth the Tempestuous Sea by his Word, and, in some Instances, shewed a Power to create: And,

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As he came with the Glory of a Power, truly becoming the Only-Begotten of the Father; so he came with the Fulness of Grace and Truth. - But he appeared without any of the Pomp or Greatness, the Riches or Authority of this World. - "he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for Many." Accordingly, "he was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Griefs;" he was despised, reproached and persecuted by the Great, who were accounted the Wise in the Jewish Nation; and at the last, their Prejudice so prevailed against him, that he was seized, tried, and put to Death as a Malefactor, to a Death most painful & ignominious. - This he himself had predicted, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, (saith he,) and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the Chief Priests & the Scribes, & they shall condemn him to Death; and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him, and the Third Day he shall rise again."

At first Sight, a most extraordinary Scene; for a Person of such Dignity, and in the Prosecution of such a Design, to go thro'; and than which, nothing could be more offensive to, or lay-in stronger Prejudices in the Minds of the Jews against him, as they expected in their Messiah's great temporal

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Prince ; and, therefore, would look upon what befel our Lord as a Demonstration, that he could not be the Saviour of Israel. But yet,

In this Manner he fulfilled the Prophecies, which went before concerning him, and devoted himself a Sacrifice for the Salvation of Mankind. — “ No Man could take his Life from him ; he laid it down of himself,” and with perfect Resignation bore the Sufferings, to which, “ by the determinate Council and Fore-Knoledge of God, he was delivered ; ” thereby doing the highest Honour to his Heavenly Father; and by his “ Obedience unto Death, even the Death of the Cross,” fully answering the whole Intention of Divine Wisdom, in appointing such an amazing Interposition and Sacrifice , as the Means of our Deliverance from the Power and penal Consequences of Sin : to which Sacrifice full Authority to pronounce Remission of Sin to the penitent was annexed ; and to which, as a great Means, our Salvation is ascribed. Therefore,

This matchless Person , who was crucified, died, and was buried, was not suffered to see Corruption. As he had acted the most benevolent & useful Part, most worthy and pleasing in the Sight of the Father, so he was rewarded by a glorious Resurrection from the Dead, by being received-upon High, to

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the Father's Right-Hand, invested with all Power both in Heavens and on Earth, and with an universal Dominion, which he will hold till the Time of the Restitution of all things, "when he will deliver-up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; that God may be all in all."

This is a Conclusion of the Scene, which, it must be owned, is worthy of the Representation, which is given of the great Design, and of him who sustained the principal Part in the Execution of it.

Having thus considered the Excellency of this Person, the Design upon which he came into the World, with the Circumstances and Manner, in which he appeared, and the Part he acted, we shall,

II. Look more particularly into his Moral-Character, as it may be collected from the Sacred Writers, who have given us the History of his Life, and lay before you some of the many Virtues which were remarkably eminent in him, with the Extent and Degree in which he exercised them. And here,

Whoever looks into his own Make and Constitution, must allow it to be with Justice observed, that One of the most easy and effectual Methods of Instruction, is that of setting before Men a winning Example. — Precepts are somewhat harsh to those

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who

who are not used to Speculations, and it requires some Trouble to make the application; but Example is plain and familiar to us, it provokes our Emulation, and easily gains upon our Affections; there is somewhat visible and sensible in it, which procures it the readier Access to the Mind, and Soul, at the same Time, both the ~~present~~ ^{present} Perfections, as well as the Loveliness of our Deity; & so in this Particular, the Christian Religion hath a great Advantage over all other Institutions, that the Blessed Author of it was pleased to live here, and die amongst us, and himself practise those Duties which he requires of us; (A) so that we can take a View of his Religion in him, and by him.

(A) No Founder of any Religion ever openly practised all those

(A) No Founder of any Religion ever openly practised all those Duties, which he recommended to others, or was himself an Example of those Rules, which he laid down as a Standard for the Rest of Mankind, except the Author of the Christian Religion, who himself practised all the distinguishing Parts of his Religion, especially what may be reckoned its Austerities, (if any such there be,) and what in all Probability would be thought the most difficult for Human Nature to compass. So that, in the highest Sense, He was the Pattern, as well as Teacher, of his Law. His Precepts and Injunctions, are like Laws obeyed very faintly, unless they are sweetened and made easy by the familiar Practice of those that give them. In a Way that is difficult, & full of Danger, it is not enough to give a good Example; But he that will there, must go before them, must make the first, and give them an Example to follow his Steps. Without this, Rules and Precepts are dry things, and give but faint Encouragement. Caesar's Example prevails much more upon his Followers, than his Word of Command. No Man

in his Life & Practice, & have a most excellent Pattern to copy after, thereby to quicken us in the Discharge of our Duty, & induce us to "live, as Christ also did."

The holy Evangelists have given us the History of his Life, related with a manly Simplicity not to be paralleled, and with a Clearness scarce to be misunderstood ; and, in the Text, our Lord himself exhorts us to comply with, and copy after it. And,

Since it is absolutely necessary that all Characters which are designed for Imitation should not be drawn too high, lest they terrify ; whilst, (on the other Hand,) it is so vastly easy to soar beyond the Reach of Man in Contemplations on the Conduct of the Son of God, I shall, therefore, confine my Remarks to his Behaviour as the Son of Man, utterly exclu-

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ever discoursed better on Magnanimity & Greatness of Mind, in great Dangers and Calamities, than Tully ; & yet when he came to the Trial, no Man ever behaved himself more faintly, or showed greater Depression of Mind, than he did ; so that it is hard to say, whether his Discourses are more apt to raise, or his Example to damp our Spirits.

Seneca writes with wonderful Wit and Smartness, with great Finesse, and Force of Argument about the Contempt of the World and Wealth ; but, when we consider how he flower'd in Wealth himself, & how intent he was to heap-up Riches beyond Measure, this makes us more apt to despise him, than the World. So necessary is it that Precepts, especially of great Difficulty, should be backed and enforced by Example, and that severe Rules should be mollified, and made easy by the Practice of those who prescribe them.

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size of his Divine Character, and to such Things as are Level to all Capacities, adapted to all Seasons & such as may, and must be copied after, and transcribed in a greater or less Degree, by all such as would to any good Purpose "follow him."

It hath been already observed, that he is represented as quite above all Moral Infirmitie. "He did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth."

And tho' such a Character is above human Nature in its present State, yet it is maintained thro a great Variety of Discourses and Actions. - His Enemies could by no Means convince him of Sin ; no Word spoken by him, or Deed done by his Hand could lay a Foundation for the least Reproach : the Evangelists ascribed nothing to him, which is unworthy of him, or which is not in Character. - Purity and Holiness was that Attribute of his Divinity which he never suffered to be separated from him ; - when his Omnipotence was shrowded under Weakness ; when his Divine Majesty was eclipsed under a Vail of Flesh ; when his endless Eternity seemed to be exchanged for a short Span of Days ; when his boundless Infinity appeared shrunk to our narrow Dimensions ; yet still his immaculate Holiness stuck close to him under all these Alterations ; - he never divested himself of his unspotted Purity, but always kept up and maintained

ained that great Name and Character.

"The Lord, Our Righteousness." (w)

He was Holy, Harmless, and Undefiled, Separate from Sinners - hereby "leaving us an Example," that tho' we cannot keep pace with him, yet "We

(A) That Christ was "Holy, without Spot & Blotch, Harmless, and Undefiled, and Separate from Sinners," - that "there was no Guile in his Mouth, that he never did amiss, but always went about doing good," and was as "a Lamb without Spot," is often affirmed in the New-Testament, that it can admit of no Dispute. — See the 13th Article of Religion.

Tho' our Saviour was allied to all the Infirmitie's of our Nature, yet was He wholly a Stranger to the Uncleanness and Impurity of it. Tho' He was made in all Things like as we are; yet was He ever free from Sin. This was not only true in His Rational Powers, (the Superior Part called the Spirit,) in Opposition to the lower Part; but also in those Appetites & Affections that arise from our Bodies, & from the Union of our Souls to them, called the Fleish. For, tho' in these Christ, having the Human Nature truly in him, had the Appetites of Hunger equally with us, yet the Devil could not tempt him by that to distrust God, or to desire a miraculous Supply sooner than was fitting: He overcame even that necessary Appetite, whenever there was any temptation given him "to do the Will of his Heavenly Father;" He had also in him the Avernsions to Pain and Suffering, and the Horror of a violent and ignominious Death, as planted in our Natures; and, in this it was natural to him to wish and pray that the Cup might pass from him. But in this his Purity appeared the most eminently, that tho' he felt the Weight of his Nature to a vast Degree, he did, notwithstanding that, limit and conquer it so entirely, that he resigned himself absolutely to his Father's Will, - "Not my Will, but thine be done."

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should FOLLOW his Steps." — And? Shall we, who profess ourselves to be his Servants and Followers, neglect so just & inseparable a Badge of our Profession? especially as the sole Intent of his coming into the World, was to " save us from our Sins, and to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works." But,

That he was without Sin, is the lowest Thing ascribed to him; we find every thing excellent in his Character. His Doctrine was pure and complete; and his Example of an universal Nature and Design. To speak FULLY, therefore, of ALL that the Son of God did, would be impossible; I shall therefore single-out a few of his MANY Virtues, and they the most remarkable. As,

First, The Life of our Blessed Saviour was a Pattern of the most SUBSTANTIAL and REAL Virtues, of servant Piety and Devotion towards God. — With Regard to God, he was constant in his Attendance on his Worship; and devout, without Ostentation; he shews us the Importance of the Duty, and the Bounds we are to set to it; and in himself, and by his Word, hath given us the truest Description wherein it consisteth, [viz] "in the Heart and in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men, but of God."

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To his Pienjies to add the perfect Simplicity of his Spirit; Here was no mean low End proposed which required Cunning, or the Arts of Hypocrisy to serve it, but a Design the wretchedest imaginable, pursued in the natural and proper Methods, with the greatest Openness, & Frankness. - Indeed, there is nothing, against which he expresseth a greater Abhorrence, and which he more directly opposeth in his Laws, than corrupt selfish Views and Hypocrisy; He pursued his own Design uniformly, and steadily, taught Mankind plain and necessary Truths, and laid down his Life in Confirmation of it. - He did not flatter the Great, nor address himself to the Powerful for Protection and Defence; - He spared no Vice nor indulged Men in the Negligence of any Virtue. He knew that the World, (i.e) the Persons, in whom the Spirit of the World reigned, must hate him; he mourned over, but was content to bear it; meditating no mean Way of escaping their Malice, any more than revenging it. - His Power, which would have crushed and destroyed them at once, was never exerted in Prejudice to his Enemies; for "he came not to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them." He went on constantly towards the great Mark he had in View, welcoming every Circumstance or Event, which lay in the Way to it, or could contribute to his gaining it.

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But

But, In Conjunction with his Simplicity of Spirit, we find a Sense of Dignity and Greatness of Mind, which became the Son of God; the most distant, indeed, from the haughty Air, and the supercilious Brow, which speak a little & contracted, not a great Spirit; by shewing themselves in the Vastness of his Design, in the Steadiness of his Execution, his utter Negligence of this World, and all, which the Children of it account great and happy, and in frequent Expressions, which become a Character of the most Significant in the Creation of God, and exalted to the highest Dignity in it. - He layeth the Foundation of the most glorious of all Kingdoms, and is the Head of a Body, in which Angels and Men may be said to be United. - He cometh singly, to serve the greatest and most important Purposes to Mankind, which the Heart can possibly conceive. - In doing this, he stoppeth at no Suffering whatever, and sheweth a Temper, upon which no Impression could be made, which should be to the Disadvantage of his Cause, or divert him from pursuing his great Design. And, tho' veild with the greatest Humanity, he often uttered Sentiments which became his matchless Dignity, and a Person who filled such an important Station in the moral World. - "And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all Men unto me."

me." - "As the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself, and to give it to whomsoever he will." - "I give you Power to tread on Scorpions & Serpents, & over all the Power of the Enemy." - "Thinkest thou Now, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently send me more than twelve Legions of Angels: But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be." - "All Power in Heaven and Earth is given to me." - But, above all, in his Expressions in that admirable Address to the Father, as recorded in the 17th of St. John. But further

This Sense of Dignity was attended with the utmost Charity. - He came down from Heaven upon the most gracious and compassionate, as well as the greatest Design. - In executing it, he took all Opportunities, even seeking Occasions, "going-about doing Good," both temporal, and spiritual, to all Men — of which his whole Life was one great and continued Instance, though even sometimes he was at the Expence of Miracles to do it. - Wherever he came, the substantial Monuments of his Charity and Grace were left behind him. (A)

His

(A) Learned Men, to whom the Rest of the World are Infants, have the same Affection of nourishing Minds, as the PELICAN in feeding her Young, which is at the Expence of the very Substance of Life.

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His Discourses were always either instructive in divine Truths, or persuasive to holy Living : he in no way declined it, how difficult or displeasing soever to Flesh and Blood, being himself of perfect Purity and Innocence of Life.

What various Instances of Humility, Benevolence and Love to Mankind, shine-out in all his Actions ? Every Part of his Conduct was a Testimony of his Love, & every Act of his Life a Proof of it. - With what unwearied Application does he labour to do Men good, even in Despite of themselves ? - What Compassion does he shew to their Infirmities and Faults, and what Readiness to help & deliver them ? Nothing could provoke him to "return Evil for Evil," nor Temptations induce him to lay-aside his Mercy ; and throughout his whole Life , with what Condescension and Pity doth he converse with the most despised and wicked of Mankind , endeavouring their Improvement and Conversion ? - With what Openness of Heart doth he receive all that come to him, and with what Pleasure doth he give every good Action its just Commendation , and cherish every Inclination to Virtue.

Men , indeed , may sometimes be wrought-upon by a subtle Scheme of Policy, to part with some present Advantage in Hopes of greater in Reversion. But

But, O! Our Blessed Lord and Saviour had no such Inducement for his quitting all the Glory he stood possessed of, and taking upon him a State of Meanness - His only Motive was, his Love to Mankind, a tender Concern for the Good of his Creatures, & the Yearning of his Bowels towards their future Welfare.

He had no Advantage to seek, no private Interest to promote, for he enjoyed ALL things valuable in their most absolute Perfection; being possessed of infinite Happiness, (as being God and Lord of all Things,) could propose to himself no Improvement of them.

It was, therefore, only for us Men, and for our Salvation that he became Man; and through Life, acted so humantly towards us: his only Aim was to communicate a due Share of his own Happiness to us, & to sanctify & exalt our Nature above its primitive Dignity, to a Participation of his most inherent and essential Blessedness. And,

As his Love was thus great and wonderful in its Degree; so was it also in its Largeness and Extent.

It was not restrained, as in the FIRST Covenant, to one particular Nation of the Earth; but was as diffusive as Mankind itself, and had no other Bounds but those of the Universe.

Shall Christ then, express to us so astonishing a Love, and shall we pretend to be his Followers and call ourselves after his most venerable Name, without endeavouring to resemble him in this important Character, of Love and Charity?

Rather let us love him above all things, and our Brethren for his Sake - If a Man loved his Saviour he would follow his Example, and would, (like him,) have an extensive Charity for all Men. But,

In him we do not only see the greatest Benevolence and Good-Will, but likewise the greatest Tenderness and Delicacy of Affection, which every one will acknowledge to be a beautiful Part of any Character in human Life. Indeed,

Dispassionate Benevolence towards all Beings capable of Happiness, & Complacency towards worthy moral Characters, are Perfections in their utmost Extent. Yet Tenderness, Sympathy, & the delicate Passions and Affections, which are planted in the Heart of Man, tho often in themselves painful, and the Cause of Sufferings, (speaking, therefore, Imperfections,) still are essential to the Character of a perfect Man, & are most rich Ornaments of Humanity: and they discover themselves very naturally in our Saviour. - See him at the Grave of Lazarus; see him weeping over the obstinate Jerusalem doomed

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ed to Destruction ; especially see the most affectionate and true Friend, in his last Discourses to his Disciples, in which the Reader will observe the greatest Tenderness, but nothing weak or feeble ; on the contrary by the most generous, elevating, and stable Consolations, he endeavours to satisfy their Minds against the Apprehensions of Suffering, and sendeth them into the World, prepared as he was, to carry the great Point they had in View to themselves and Mankind, at any Expence of Toil or Pain they could possibly undergo. But further

His Life was a Pattern of the most rare and unusual Virtues ; his Conversation (as we have seen,) was free and open without Guile or Disguise, which is by no means a COMMON Virtue. — Perfect Sincerity is a great Foundation of Goodness, it being "Soundness at the Heart."

He was also eminent in the unusual Virtue of Humanity, without Affectation or Secret Pride.

This appeared remarkable & natural in his whole Life, which was a continued Instance of it, and is also what is particularly proposed to our Imitation from the Injunction before us : " Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am MEEK and LOWLY in Heart."

What an amazing Scene of Condescension opens itself to us in our very first Reflection on him, as a God incarnate !

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With

With what Astonishment do we consider him emptying himself of Majesty, changing his Glory into the Similitude of his Creatures, & in being clothed after their Likeness? For, thus was the Only Begotten brought into the World.

Mortality, in its most desirable Circumstances, hath all its Enjoyments so mixed with Pain and Disquiet, that, ineffable had been our Lord's Humility in submitting to this State, tho attended with all the Advantages, that Ease, Affluence and Authority could give it: But, the Blessed Jesus came not in a Character to shear the Pleasures and Glories of Life with us, to be "a Ruler or Prince on Earth;" Not The Meanness of his Birth, the Toils & Indigence of his Life, and the Shame & Ignomy of his Death, are all of them convincing Arguments that "his Kingdom was not of this World."

Had he affected external Pomp , he might have engrossed all the Riches of the World , and in the Splendor of his Court, as well as in the Dignity of his Person, have been " greater than Solomon in all his Glory," and exceeded even the carnal Expectation of the Jews : But, he voluntarily declined all these Advantages , and " took upon him the Form of a Servant," and, (as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful Description of him,) " He had no

for ever combined; else we should either admis
and disbelieve him. — Ignorant saw v. 1. His - 1. his q. C
Counting.

The only publick known he suffered by being born
with, & contempned with Humility; and the Predica
tion of the Prophet was not more surely fulfilled in
the Hosannahs of his Disciples, than in the Mock
ups wherewith he accosted them, "Lowly", and sit-
ting upon an Ass." — If we attend him in his Co-
wishes, we shall find him generally encompassed
with the Multitude, " & preaching the Gospel unto
the Poor :" His particular Friends and Associates were
chosen out of the lowest of the People, and among
them he appears rather a Servant (^(A)); than a Master !
He could not to be ministered unto, but to mi-
nister, & to give his Life a Ransom for many :" He
accordingly gave his Life, & with amazing Relig-
ion humbled himself to Death, even the Death

of a "miserable man."

(A) It is observable that there is no Act of our Saviour's Life to
which he particularly called the Attentive great Disciples, as to their
surprising Act of his Humility in washing his Disciples' feet : And the
Inference he directs them to make from it, is, that " If He, their Lord
and Master" had condescended to such an humiliating Act of Service
unto them, much more ought they to be ready in the like Offices to
one another . This, indeed , was an Action which appears no Way
conducive to the End of his Mission , but as it recommended and pre-
ferred Humility . No Argument could be drawn hence for the Con-
viction of Menkind . It could therefore have no other View than their
Instruction , and to enforce upon them the Practice of this amiable
Virtue .

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the Cross with his Sister's Opposition & Murther, or Complaint. - His Love was stronger than Death, and if such an accursed Devilish child had no Man, who had lay down his Life for his Friends? His might have commanded the regions of the gods to his Rescue; or, by one single Act of Omnipotence have destroyed this Enemy: "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" — "A man no man but his Humiliation; therefore, I have suppressed his Almighty Power, and neither resisted nor revenged the Injuries he received, but submitted himself passively to him that judgeth righteously; and thereby, that we might know our selves to be worthy of his love." Here was Condescension, & Philanthropy, indeed! From so great a Height, as that of Glory and Majesty, with the Eternal God, to stoop to the lowest Degree of Misery, and Misery in so low Men, and for our Salvation." And,

After this, What Condescension, in us, is there, that is fit to be compared unto it? And how should it bring down our high looks, that the Man of God, who, in the first instance, was made to be the Son of the Earth may be no more exalted. If we call ourselves his Disciples, let the Humanity of our Master, (recommended to us, by so many Arguments,) correct the Pride and Ambition of his Servants. If this Divine Person thought it no Disgrace to submit selfe unto such contempt of men, minuti-

mission to his Majesty to leave us an Example of such amazing Humility, let not the Greatest among Men, think it any Reproach to their Dignity, to learn of Him to be meek and lowly. In whatever Station God shall require our Service, let us still believe that we are the Disciples of the Meek and humble Jesus, and that it is required of us, that in this, as well as in all other things, we should "Learn of him, & follow his Steps," "that we should walk even as He also walked," and "let this Mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus."

In all Things, therefore, let us "put-on the Ornament of a meek and humble Spirit, which in the Sight of God, is of great Price;" and then Christ will acknowledge us to be HIS indeed. Again,

His Contempt of the World, the Enjoyment and Pleasures of it, was such, that he refused a Kingdom, secreting himself, "when he knew that they would make him a King by Force." - and contented himself in the meanest State of Life; this he did, to teach us, not to over-prize, too earnestly seek-after, nor too inordinately love, the Things before us.

There appeared throughout his whole Conversation, a great Indifference as to these things; he shewed no great Effusions of Joy at the Good that befel him, nor great Sorrow, nor mourning for the

Evil; but acquiesced in either, and thought it of no great Consequence which was his Lot: And the Reason was plainly this, [viz] he did not think himself at Home, - He considered himself as in a strange Country, & therefore, (like a wise Traveller,) made the best of his Way to his own, and gave himself but little Concern about what things befel him in the Way; & how happy would it be for themselves, and for the World in general, if his Disciples would follow him, in this.

The Reason of his conduct, holds as strong in Regard to us, as it did with him; the World is no more our Home than it was HIS, and the greatest Part of us stay as little Time in it as he did, and whence then these boundless and indefatigable Cares about the Concerns of it?

The Blessed Jesus hath set us a very different Example, if we will follow him: his Conduct was to teach us to keep a Guard upon our Passions, to proportion our Value of things to their real Worth, and not according to the Opinions of Men; and to remember, that we have here no abiding City.

The further Virtues of our Saviour, to be considered under his Moral Character, will be the Subject of the Next.

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SERMON LVII.

On the same Subject.

Matt. xi. 29; "Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me."

Having already considered, under these Words, the general Character of Christ, and shown how full his Life was of remarkable & uncommon Virtues in themselves, — I shall here show that his Life was also a Pattern of such Virtues as are most Useful & Beneficial to others, in being ready to do good unto all Men, by instructing their Ignorance, supplying their Wants, however in Needs, — by resolving their Doubts, comforting them in Trouble, and healing their Diseases and Infirmities: And, what He did in Methods miraculous and extraordinary, we are to do by ordinary Means, and by such as are in our Power: And, It is obvious to see, distant as we are from the Abilities of Christ, in how many Instances we are enabled to imitate his Acts of Beneficence.

We cannot, indeed, heal as He healed, with a Word: but the Means which Providence hath put into

into our Hands, and the many useful Discoveries, to which he hath had by Study and Researches of Men, are such, that even human Skill may work, tho' not miraculous, yet most beneficial Effects. We cannot teach as Christ taught; but the Care which Providence hath taken for the Preservation of the Scriptures, and of the Christian Church, and the great Improvement & extensive Communication of Knowledge among us, puts it in every Man's Power to be, more or less, capable of teaching others their Duty. And tho' we cannot forgive Sins, we may reclaim Sinners, and lead them up to him who can forgive them. A diligent Application of these Abilities, where we are called to the Use of them, and a charitable Application of them, as we have proper Opportunity, are Duties, by the Performance of which we may imitate the Beneficence of Christ, and for which we shall hereafter be rewarded by him.

No less remarkable was his Condescension to others, in considering their Weakness, and complying with them in things lawfull and indifferent; He who had all Authority to command, who could not err, and had all Right to be obeyed, yet condescended to the Weakness and Infirmities of others, in Things indifferent and lawful. — The Mildness of our Saviour's Behaviour, is a striking Circumstance in his

his Character, by which we all deserve; not only our Notice, but our Imitation. "A bruised Reed shall he not break, & smoking Flax shall he not quench;" is the Description with which ancient Prophecy sets forth his Behaviour: A tender Treatment and Encouragement of those he came to save, was, (it is true,) consistent; but no more consistent than it was amiable and exemplary.

"We, then, that are Strong, ought to bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not to please ourselves, for even Christ pleased not himself." But further,

Our Saviour also is a Pattern to us of such Virtues as are most hard & difficult to be practised; such as are Self-Denial, Meekness, Forgiveness of Injuries, Contentment, and Patience under Sufferings.

For Self-Denial, how remarkable was he; "He came down from Heaven not to do his own Will, (as he himself says,) but to do the Will of his Father which sent him." He renounced his own Will in Obedience to the Will of God.

Here then is an Example that hath both Argument and Encouragement to persuade us to the like Conformity; For, did he, who had a regular Will, and an unquestionable Right to all the Riches and Enjoyments of the World, - did he renounce them all, & shall we then think it too much to deny ourselves

selves in a little, who are of irregular Appetite, and of no Authority? Such an Example is before all Precept. If He thus denied himself, how ought we, since "the Disciple is not greater than his Master, nor the Servant than his Lord."

Meekness also is a very difficult Virtue, if we either consider the Infirmity of the human Nature, or the frequent Temptations to Passions and Anger. Moses, the greatest of all Prophets, & the meekest Man upon Earth, yet "spake unadvisedly with his Tongue," being provoked; but our Blessed Lord, though perpetually assaulted with the highest Provocations, yet always maintained a meek & even Spirit, answering the bitterest Reproaches, and most cruel Usage, either with calm Reasonings, or meek Silence: and tho' it had but little Effect, yet this was his Method to the last; never saying or doing any thing, which had the least Appearance of Anger; except what sprung from such a Zeal for the Honour of his Heavenly Father, as the coolest and most dispassionate Thoughts must approve.

But further, As He was meek, so was he also full of Forgiveness.

It is easy to give Precepts of Forgiveness, but the Practice is exceeding difficult. Our Blessed Saviour, therefore, not only enjoined us to forgive,

but further, (more powerfully to induce us to the Practice of it,) hath given us an Example of it in the whole Course of his Life and Conversations. He was humble, meek & benevolent in all his deportment towards Men, "at no Time rendering Evil for Evil, nor railing for railing, but contrarwse, blessing;" — "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously;" with warmth condemning all malicious and revengeful Thoughts for real Injuries; and with Forbearance and Forgiveness overlooking and even excusing Offences!

This was the Course and Manner of his Life; and even in the Article of Death itself, he not only prays for his Murderers, but pleads their Excuse, & yields up his Life as a Ransom for them: In the Extremity of his Sufferings, when the High-Priest and the People reviled him, and insulted over his misery, instead of rebuking them in Anger, he prays to God on their behalf, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Such was the Conduct of the Blessed Jesus, and such also ought to be the Deportment of all his Disciples, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God, in Christ;" which given us

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an Example; "And unto him hath forgivē us?" And again, Another Virtue; eminent in our Blessed Saviour, was his Contentedness in a low & indigent Condition. He was destitute of the necessary Supports of Life; and yet always preserved a constant Evenness & Serenity of Mind, without any anxious Care of "what he should eat or drink, or wherewith he should be cloathed." And, still ed now; sings: "If the Son of God, " who tho' Heir of all things, " was destitute of all things; " nor having where to lay his Head," was yet contented to be so, shall we murmur and repine, if all our seeming Wants are not immediately supplied?

Christ's Contempt of the World is certainly a Lesson well worthy our Attention; whatever good Things of it be set before us. We see Christ in his low Condition pointing out to us, that the things about us here, whatever they are, are not those which call for our principal Attention; The Favour, the Presence of God, & the Glories of Heaven, are our Happiness; to this Christ points out, when he himself rejected the good things of this World; for, had they been our real Happiness, Christ, who came on Purpose to lead us in the Way to real Happiness, would not have rejected them, and, by so doing, have led us from them. *Qui, hoc est nescire, ratione*

The last Virtue I shall mention, is, his Patience under Sufferings, and Resignation to the Will of God; of which our Saviour was the greatest Example that ever was: His whole Life, from his Birth to his Death, being made-up of Persecution and Patience: From the first Hour almost that he entered on his Office, he had Enemies, who lay-wait for his Life. One While he is branded with the Title of Impostor & Deceiver; at another Time he is rejected as a Demoniac; his very Kinmen & Relations deride him; he is not only stripped of his Divinity, but even of his Humanity, and made a Partner and Confederate with Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils: - the most invertebrate Enemies are reconciled, and the most opposite Factions united, to contrive and effect his Destruction: to-Day he is assaulted by the Pharisees; to-Morrow by the Sadduces; Anon by Herodians; Sometimes by all in Conjunction; the One endeavours to draw him into Blasphemy; another into Treason; and when they cannot make his Actions tally with the penal Statutes, they endeavour to bring those Laws to correspond with his Actions, raising up false Accusations, and bringing false Witnesses against him: his best Words are misinterpreted; his best Actions vilified; & an Odium thrown on the most exalted Dispensations of his Benevolence: all which, with that last Out-Rage of

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Malice

Malice against him; (Death itself,) he bore with an unexampled Patience & Resignation. "I came down from Heaven, (says he,) not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me." Again, "I have Meat to eat that ye know not of, for my Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work." And, in his Address to the Father, "I have glorified thee on Earth, I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do." And, when he came to the last dreadful Scene, of which it is apparent he had the greatest Sensibility; his Language is, "Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me; yet not my Will, but thine be done." He constantly spoke, & constantly acted, as a Person, who had nothing in View, but to glorify the Father, to execute his blessed Counsels for the Happiness of Mankind, and with the utmost Zeal to serve the Cause he had undertaken at any Expence to himself. Indeed, - The Greatness of our Lord's Sufferings, considered with his perfect Innocence, gives his Example a peculiar Force and Advantage above all others: the Apostle recommends it to us as the most perfect & powerfull: "Wherefore, (says he,) seeing we also are compassed about with such a Cloud of Wirthnesses, let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith." IV. 1. 1112

“ Mocked us our Fality who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the shame.” — “ Consider him who endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your Minds.” — “ Such Contradiction of Sinners,” such as no Man ever endured, and yet he bore all this, not with a stoical Insensibility, but with true Patience, hereby being a perfect Pattern to Mankind of patient Submission to the Will of God, duly in all things. Upon the Whole,

It is evident that our Blessed Saviour was always intent on the main Business he came about, “ which was to do the Will of him that sent him; ” this was his Meat and his Drink, and no Unworthiness in the Object could discourage him, nor Fear, either of Censure or Suffering, terrify him from pursuing it. And, in this every one of his Disciples may, and ought to follow him.

Every Man hath his Work set him in this World as well as the Blessed Jesus, and should, therefore, like him, ever have it in View. Every one’s Business in this World is to prepare for a better, by purifying his Heart from Sin and Corruption, making a daily Progress towards Perfection.

“ This is the Will of him that sent us,” and who ever will faithfully discharge it, must, (as far as his

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Nature

Nature will permit,) be ever upon his Guard against all Attacks of Sin, and ready to embrace every Opportunity of growing in Grace and Virtue; that in the End we may be found true and faithful Servants of our Lord, and be made Partakers of his Glory in his Kingdom with the Father.

This was the general Conduct, and these some of the innumerable Instances of Virtue and Goodness, which were eminently and highly conspicuous in the Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, these, and all others, (for Time would fail me to speak of EVERY Thing which might be advanced upon this Subject,) he exercised without any Imperfection, all in their full Extent, hereby "leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps. In a Word,

Our Blessed Saviour, who "came to purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works," hath not only prescribed to us the most excellent Uniform of Doctrine, but hath also as uniformly exemplified the same in his own Life & Conversation, not like the Jewish Rabbi's "binding heavy Burthens upon Men, and grievous to be borne," without assisting themselves in the Work; but hath shewn us, from his own Practice, the Practicableness of all his Precepts; — Which brings me,

Secondly, To exhort you to a Conformity to him,
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by what Arguments can be produced, both from its Nature and Perfection, its Ease and Advantage.

And here, The Example of our Lord, (as hath been already shewn,) was full and perfect, entire and complete. The Life of our Lord is a most absolute and perfect Pattern of Holiness & Goodness, and every Virtue: His Life was the Life of God, in the Nature and Likeness of Man. As the Son of God, he was "the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image and Character of his Person;" As the Son of Man he had all the moral Perfections belonging to human Nature, exclusive of any evil Inclinations, or sinful Frailties, though not without our natural Infirmitie^s.

His Example was calculated for all Times and Places, suited to all Callings and Capacities of Men, and fitted for general Direction and Imitation in all Sorts of Goodness and Virtue.

Though he was a Person most high in Birth and Dignity, being no less a Person than the "only-begotten Son of God," the Maker and Heir of all things, yet he submitted to the lowest Condition of Poverty and Meanness, of Contempt & Sufferings, in Order to teach Men of high Degree to be humble and serviceable to others; and for such as are in Affliction, to be contented and cheerful in every the meanest or hardest State.

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Though

Though "in Him were all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge," yet he was not Ostentatious, nor clouded his heavenly Doctrine with Dark-Sayings, abstruse Speculations, or sublime Mysteries, but in a plain familiar Way, instructed his hearers in what was most useful & necessary to be known. (A) Though he confounded the Wisdom of the Wise, yet he "condescended to Men of low Estate," to the Weakness and Ignorance of the meanest Capacities: so that there is no Man, who employs the ordinary Means of Instruction can have any just Pretence for Ignorance in his Duty.

It might, perhaps, have been more agreeable to the Genius of some Men, and particularly our Modern Divines, if our Saviour had delivered himself in a more RHETORICAL and POMPous Stile, or entertained his Hearers with curious and philosophical Disquisitions. And, it is probable, indeed, had he

(A) Rhetorick in serious Discourse, is like the Flower in Corn; pleasing to those who come only for Amusement, but prejudicial to him who would reap Profit from it. - Studied Figures & Ornaments in Speech are not always conformable to good Sense; they serve more to amuse than instruct, and are oftentimes a Burden to the Speaker, as well as the Hearer. — Clearness is the Rule of Speaking, as Sincerity is the Rule of Thinking. Too bright Sallies of Wit, like Flashes of Lightning, rather dazzle than illuminate. A noble Simplicity, when properly used, makes more Impression than Tropea and Figures.

See Vol. I. Preface, page 26. &c.

and when a Teacher spake from God, he would, (ignorably to the Design of most human Authors,) have gratified the Curiosity of those, to whom he addressed his Discourses, by condescending to the most popular and human Arts of Persuasion. But it is below Persons in Authority to bespeak the Favour of those who are to receive Laws from them; or to use any mean Innuendos to persuade, what they have a Right, (a Right supported by the clearest Reason,) to command. - And, therefore, (in the Conclusion of our Saviour's excellent Sermon on the Mount,) it is assigned as the Cause, why the People were astonished at his Doctrine, that "he spake, as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes." (i.e.) he delivered his Doctrine to the Jews, as a Law-Giver, "who was able to save and to destroy;" and not after the Manner of those popular Teachers, who were to make-good what they said, by specious Sophistry, and a vain Shew of human Learning. (A)

Besides, It being the Will of God that all Men should have the Means of Salvation rendered to

(A) It is said, that when ARISTOTLE saw the Books of Moses, he commended them for their majestic Style, as well becoming a God — but without said, That Way of Writing was not fit for a Philosopher, because there was Nothing proved, but Maxims were delivered as if they would rather command than persuade Belief.

them, in Order that they might be saved, and come
to the Knowledge of the Infallible Saviour; in
the Discharge of his Prophetic Office, he adopted
the Means so gracious, and kind, and consulted
rather what might be of most obvious and general
Life & Benefit to Mankind, than what might tend to
gratify the Inclination or Curiosity of particular
Persons. Accordingly; in this admirable Sermon
upon the Mount, (which contains the Substance of
the Christian Religion, with Respect to moral Duty,) we
observe no Rhetorical Art of Speech, or elab-
orate Periods, such as we meet with in the ancient
Heathen Moralists (A) & in Modern Divines, who of-
ten, indeed, amuse and divert our Thoughts in an
agreeable Manner, but seldom speak to the Heart;
and, therefore, seem rather to be principally designed
for the Pleasure, than the Profit of the Readers and
Hearers.

(A) *points I omitted to wedz nizv s bns , vlinos*
 (A) In certain Schools of the ancient Philosophers, they had a
 Sort of "CABAL," or secret Tradition, which was communicated to
 them, (if I may so speak,) under the Sanctest Vows. None but those
 of their own Sect could, without an high Profanation, be let into the
 Mysteries of it: and for this Reason, their Principles were conveyed
 down in ~~obscure~~ and obscure Expressions ~~and~~ which they only who had a
 Key to them, were capable of unfolding them. As to the profane
 Vulgar, (for so the proud Philosophers esteemed them, *qui prophaneum*
Zeigur, et cetera,) they were looked upon with too great Contempt, to
 have any due Care taken for their Instruction, even in the fundamen-
 tal and necessary Points of Morality.

Motives. If perhaps, as Superior to both these Reasons, they did not consult their own Glory and Applause.

And herein He acted conformably; not only to his own, and His Father's Desire, that every Person to whom the Gospel might be preached, should be brought to the "Acknowledgement of the Truth;" but to an express Prophecy in Scripture concerning the Gospel-Dispensation, [viz] that "all Men should then know God," or have the Means of knowing him indifferently offer'd to them," from the "Least to the Greatest." But further,

Another Consideration which should induce us to imitate the Life of Christ, is, that neither his Example nor Precepts, exact or require GREAT Things from us.

Nothing was ever more easy for common Imitation than his holy Life; for he had no affected Singularities, nor peculiar Austerities different from common Men; but his Conversation was kind and innocent, free and familiar to all Persons;

He did not place Religion in Retirement from the World, in abstruse Mysteries, or defined Speculations, but in the honest Practice of solid Virtue, in Meekness and Humility, in Kindness and Charity in Contentment and Ease of Mind, and in Patience and Submission to the Will of God in ALL Things.

All this is Level to every Man's Understanding, and easy also to our Practice and Imitation; for, it requires only an honest Mind, due Care & Diligence, to do what we know, to follow our Guide in a plain Way, and in all the Actions of our Lives to tread in those Steps in which the Son of God hath gone before us. Besides,

How encouraging is his Example! To see what God requires of us, performed by a Man like Ourselves, gives great Life and Spirit to all good Resolutions and sincere Endeavours.

Precept, however prevailing in itself, when drawn out in the lively Colours of Truth with Energy, yet we all know is much more so, when we can enforce and back our Precepts with singularly striking Examples.

People, who have no great Relish for Religion, are apt to complain of the arduous Difficulties in the Ways of it. - These Difficulties we grant, would cost us a great Deal of Pain to overcome with Words; but Examples are far more prevailing. - To Flesh and Blood, therefore, (gainsaying to every Motion of Grace,) where Wisdom cannot be admitted, we must refer these lively Oracles, and "the Finger of Silence must rest upon their Tongues."

Indeed, the Son of God, it must be granted, had many

many Advantages above us; but then we are to consider, that God doth not require perfect Obedience from us, but only Sincerity, and an earnest Endeavour after greater Perfection, which, through God's Assistance, (which is never wanting to the faithful) is very possible, even in this imperfect State. Besides,

The same Spirit which kept and preserved him from all Sin, is equally able to mortify Sin in us, and to enable us to perform the Will of God in such a Manner, as he is pleased to accept & approve of: But, What should chiefly induce us hereto, is the Advantage that will accrue to the true Disciples & Followers of our Lord from it.

All Pretences to Religion, however great and pompous, are nothing-worth, unless we Do the things which he saith; and, what it is to be excluded from a Share in his Merits, and the Reward which he hath purchased for us, is but too obvious here to be enlarged on.

Such, then, is the Example of best Lord's Life, as to be calculated for all Capacities and Conditions, for the Wise and the Weak, "the Rich & the Poor, one with another." - Perfect as possible, yet easy for common Imitation, & fitted for the general Direction of Mankind, in all Sorts of Virtue and Goodness; and, most inexcusable shall we be, if we are

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not hereby wrought upon to do somewhat ourselves, from a Consideration of the great things which he hath done for us, — from the great Example he hath shewn us, and the holy Precepts he hath laid before us.)

His Life was pure without any Mixture of Imperfection; humble without Meanness; innocent without Weakness: He was Wise without Cunning, constant in doing good, without Ostentation; virtuous without Vanity; heroicall without Transport; Life even of one Tenor, always employed in the Work of God; for the Benefit and Advantage of Men.

How glorious then to write after a Copy so perfect, and yet so familiar, and fit for our Imitation! who would not be ambitious to live the Life of the Son of God, which so highly exalts us; (A) when, for our Sakes, he was pleased to become, and live as a Son of Man? Gratitude, and our own honour and Interest, forbid that we should do otherwise.

The Pattern I have been recommending is the Example of Jesus Christ - "redemptio domino - (A) God's Glory and our Happiness are so inseparably conjoined, that we cannot aim right at Either, but we must hit Both; for God has not, throughout all his Creation, an Ensign of Honour, so truly worthy of him, as that of a divine and pious Soul, that reflects his Image, and shines-back his own Glories upon him.

Example of One who we ought to love, reverence, and obey above all : It is the Example of our Lord and Master, our Saviour and Sovereign, the Founder of our Religion, "the Author and Finisher of our Faith."

It is the Example of our best Friend and greatest Benefactor, of Him who laid-down his Life for us, and sealed his Love to us with his own Blood.

How powerfully, then, should such a Pattern recommend Goodness, Kindness, and Compassion to us, who ourselves have received so much Advantage and Comfort from it?

Had not the Son of God commiserated our Case, pitied & relieved us in our wretched Condition, we had been past all Remedy, and extremely miserable for ever. All the Kindness and Compassion, all the Mercy and Forgiveness which he would have us practice to others; he himself hath first exercised towards us. - He that commands us to do-good to others was our great Benefactor : He that requires us to forgive our Enemies, himself shed his own Blood to obtain the Forgiveness of our Sins ; and "while we were Enemies to him, he laid-down his Life for us," making himself the Example of that Goodness which he would have us to shew to others ; he was in every thing complete, "that they might be Followers of his Steps." Serm. LVII. What

What therefore remains, but this brief Exposition;

Are any of us reduced to Poverty and Want?

"Let us remember him, who, "though Lord of all, and Heir of all things," yet "had not where to lay his Head;" and who, being rich in Glory, "for our Sakes became POOR, that we, thro' his Poverty, might be made RICH."

Are we persecuted and exercised with Sufferings and Reproaches? "Let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the Shame."

Are we discouraged in well-doing? "Let us consider him who endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our Minds." And,

If the Son of God was thus humble, and emptied himself of all his Glory, was despised and reviled of Men, ought we to magnify and exalt ourselves? Shall we be covetous, and thirst after the Things of this World, when the Son of God despised them?

Shall we slight and contemn the poor, or rather not

more eminent Persons; which the Son of God became mean and low for our Sakes, and whose Indigent Condition in the World hath made Poverty not only tolerable, but (if I may so speak,) glorious? (A)

Can we be angry on every little Occasion, when we consider the Meekness of the Son of God, with what Serenity & Evenness of Mind he behaved under great and continual Provocations?

Shall we be discontented in any Condition, when we consider how contented the Son of God was, in a State the meanest and most destitute; how perfectly resigned to the Will of his heavenly Father in all things?

(A) Though neither a State of Poverty, nor Wealth, is, in itself, considered an Argument of the Divine Favour, or Displeasure: yet, of the Two, there seem to be more advantageous things spoken in scripture concerning a State of Poverty.

It was to the Poor that Christ first preached the Gospel: — They were the Persons, for whom our Lord, on all Occasions, expressed so great Tenderness and Compassion: — They, while he was here upon Earth, were his chosen Disciples, his Companions, and, (which includes all other Testimonies of Respect,) his Friends. I shall only add, that in Favour of them, the Apostle St. James puts the Question with a visible Exclamation, “Hath not God, (I speak it,) chosen the Poor of this World rich in Faith, and heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath prepared for them that love him.” See Matt. 19, 24. with parallel Texts. — Poverty is then only Master of Disgrace & Reproach, when attendant on Sloth & Idleness, or on Wantonness and Prodigality.

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Shall we fear Injuries, Slanders, and Calumnies so grievously as to be out of all Patience, when we consider with what Meekness of Temper, and undisturbed Tranquillity, the Son of God bore all these? " who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, & possessed his Soul in Patience."

Can we expect to be treated better than He was? If perfect Innocence was contented so to be traduced, evil spoken-of, and persecuted, shall we, (who are Sinners, and "less than the least of all his Mercies") think to escape better than One who was so infinitely good & perfect? "The Servant is not greater than the Lord;" and, "if they do these things in the Green-Tree, what will be done in the Dry?"

Can we entertain Thoughts of Revenge, when we have such a Pattern before us, who poured-out his Blood for the Expiation of the Guilt of them that shed it, & spent his last Breath in Charitable Prayers for his Betrayers and Murderers? "Endue us, Lord, with the like Temper," but, "lead us not into Temptation."

Thus, by setting the Example of our Blessed Lord before us, & keeping it constantly in Remembrance, we may as constantly correct all our Errors and Defects,

We

We may from such an Example be strongly ex-
cited, & almost forced to the Practice of every
Virtue, had to all Godliness.

Let us not, therefore, be disengaged by the Con-
sideration of our own Weakness, for he who hath
given us such an Example of Virtue, will also give
us, (if we duly seek after it,) his Holy Spirit to as-
sist and enable us to conform ourselves to this Pat-
tern of our Lord and Master, and to "follow the
Blessed Steps of his most holy Life."

To Conclude, — When Almighty God designed
the Reformation of the World, and the restoring of
Man to the Image of God, (the Pattern after which
he was first made,) he did not think it enough to
give us the most perfect Laws of Holiness & Virtue,
but hath likewise set before us a living Pattern, and
a familiar Example to excite and encourage us

Such is the Sovereign Authority of God over
Men, that he might, if he had pleased, have only
given us a Law, written with his own Hand, as he
did to the People of Israel from Mount-Sinai: But
such is his Goodness, that he hath sent his Embas-
sador, from Heaven, to us, (God manifested in the
Flesh,) to declare & interpret his Will and Pleasure
to us; and, not only so, but to fulfill that Law,

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Himself,

Himself, the Observation of which he requires from us; which surely must take off all Objection against the Practicableness of it, and animate us to the utmost Exertion of our Ability in so commendable an Employ, as that of a Christian Life.

To see what God requires of us, performed by "a Man like Ourselves," must give great Life and Spirit to our sincere Endeavours, & strongly incline us to "go, and do likewise."

The Work itself is of that Nature, that, in Reason, Men need not be courted to it by Persuasion, nor urged by Importunity: - The very Proposal of the thing, and the Pattern before us, is of it self sufficient to allure the Generous and Well-disposed; and the Threats he hath denounced against the Disobedient, must deter the Stubborn and Refractory.

"Let the same Mind, then, be in us that was also in Christ Jesus," who himself did no Sin, but was a complete Pattern of every Virtue.

Sermon
to the People of Israel from Mount-Sinai: But
not in this Goodness, that we perish from the Earth,
but, from Heaven, to us, (Goodness being in the
Heaven,) to declare the holiest and Wondrous
Himself.

THE FATHER

SERMON LIX.**Of the Divinity of Christ.**

Heb. i. 6. "When He bringeth-in the First-Begotten into the World, He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him."

Having already considered the general Character of our Saviour, with Respect to the Design upon which he came into the World, and the Manner in which it was executed; And instanced-in Some of the many Virtues which were remarkably eminent in Him; With the Extent and Degree in which he exercised them; And exhorted to a Conformity to him by what Arguments could be produced; It may be necessary to speak here, more particularly of his Nature, (i.e) Of the Dignity and Divinity of his Person. And here,

The many high Expressions given, in Scripture, of Him, leave us in no Manner of Room to doubt of his Eternal Generation, and Divinity with the Father, before the World was.

Those

Those Expressions, indeed, whereby we infer the Honour that is due unto Him, are not the least to be insisted upon to this Purpose : That He is "full of Grace and Truth," - " And that, in every thing, we beheld his Glory," (as the Works of the Father were manifested in him,) These Qualities do compenduously resolve the Height of his Generation, that He was the Begotten of the Father, and Partaker of his Nature.

This Argument, tho it might be insisted on with Success, (" for no Man could do the Works which He did, except the Father was with him;) yet none seem more convincing, or to strike more forcibly at the Root of the Arian Scheme than those taken from the Text, where Christ is declared to be the Son of God in a PROPER and NATURAL Sense, as begotten of the Substance of the Father, being thereby " Very God of Very God," by an eternal Communication of the Divine Essence ; And therefore, Religious Adoration is to be paid to Him.

" When He bringeth-in the First-Begotten into the World, He saith, And let all the Angels of God WORSHIP Him."

This Method of evincing our Saviour's Divinity, (tho but rarely insisted on,) seems yet the most cogent

gent, both because it is the easiest to so many Evidence, as the other Proofs of this Doctrine are; and also, because it more clearly and compendiously proves the Unity of the God-Man into That which is the Catholick Faith, [viz.] an Unity of Nature & Substance.

What I shall, therefore, undertake from the Words before us, shall be,

I. First, To show the Unity of the Two Natures in the One-Person of Christ; (i.e.) that He is consubstantial with the Father, being co-eternally existent with him, and in him. And,

II. (As a further Proof and Confirmation of the Doctrine advanced,) That therefore, Religious Adoration is to be paid to him. — "When He bringeth in the First-Begotten into the World, He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship Him."

First, I am to show the Unity of the Two Natures in the One-Person of Christ, and that He is consubstantial with the Father, being co-eternally existent with him, and in him.

And this, (I presume,) the Words before us undeniably do; — Indeed, not only in These Words, but in other Places of Scripture, we have the same Serm. LVIII. expressed.

expressed to us ; particularly by St. John, whose Gospel seems peculiarly written so as to make it evident this great Article of our Faith, that Our Blessed Saviour is, in many places styled "the Begotten" & "the First and Only-Begotten of the Father."

Now, - Generation, (we know,) is a Substantial and Essential Production ; & in this is distinguished from all other Propositions, which only regard some Quality in the produced. (A)

If He were called the Son of God, only by deriving from him a Created Nature ; & not the very individual Essence of the Father, He might, indeed, be styled God's Creature, or the Son of God, in that common, figurative & metaphorical Sense, in which other Beings are in Scripture so called ; But This

(A) *Begotten* is a Term that naturally signifies the Relation between the Father and the Son. But what it strictly signifies here, is not possible for us to understand, till we assign a Reason why the Emanation of the Son, and not of the Holy Ghost likewise is called *begetting*. In this we see no Scripture Argument, but most manifest we cannot frame a distinct Apprehension of that which is so far above us.

This *Begotten* was from all Eternity : If it had been in Time, the Son and Holy Ghost must have been Creatures ; but if they were truly God, they must be Eternal, & not produced by having a Being given them, but educed of a Substance that was Eternal, and from which they did eternally spring.

The Son, or Word, is truly God, no man can doubt all Eternity, and himself be of the same substance with the Father ; otherwise he could not be God ; since a God of another Substance, and of another Duration, is a Contradiction. See the Second Article of Religion.

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could not be a sufficient Foundation for that peculiar Sonship, which the Scripture allow him; no Ground for his being styled God's Only-Begotten, and no Reason for his being called God's Own Son, for God, his own Father.

These Terms which Signify PROPER and NATURAL Sonship, are plainly inconsistent with any figurative, improper or common One; For, they are at least very strong Presumptions, if not absolute and conclusive Proofs of his Communication of the Divine Nature; For, what other Notion than that of a Consubstantiality, can we possibly draw from a Text, where he is styled "God's Own, and ONLY-BEGOTTEN?"

The most proper, (I may say, the ONLY proper,) Generation, which we know of, is "the Production of another in the same Nature with the Producer;" Our Saviour, therefore, being BEGOTTEN of God, must be Consubstantial with him, "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God;" & that, because he is "the ONLY-Begotten of the Father," (a)

This, [viz] that Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, because He is the Son of God, is a Consequence allowed by the Primitive Writers; particularly Irenaeus admits this Proposition as true, that "whosoever is born of God, is God." But further,

Noz.

(a) Generation Is natural. Serm. LVIII.

Not only his Generation, but his Generation from all Eternity, will further prove him to have been solely from the Nature and Substance of the Father. For God's being cannot be got out of

If he were begotten from all Eternity, it must necessarily follow, that he was begotten from the Substance of the Supreme God; — there being nothing existent from all Eternity from whence he could possibly be begotten, except the Nature and Substance of the Supreme God. And, evinced as The Divine Essence, which we have thus proved to have been communicated from God the Father, to God the Son, was derived to Him fully and perfectly; not in an inferior Degree, imperfectly, or by Parts: but in the same infinite Perfection as the Father himself enjoys it. For the Divine Perfection & Essence admits of no Division; is "IMPARTIBILIS," & therefore cannot be communicated incompletely. The Fullness, therefore, of the Godhead must have been and was communicated to Him. — So saith the Scripture; "In Him verily dwelleth all the Fullness of the Godhead, bodily." — Again, "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." — In Conformity to which, our Church, in her Song of Praise (the "Te Deum,") hath the following, [viz] "Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father." Upon

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Upon this Communication of the Godhead from the Father to the Son, by a Substantial Generation, is founded & established all that Subordination which we assert among the Persons of the Trinity.

The Necessity of maintaining some Subordination is evident from hence, that unless we do so, we apparently run into TRITHEISM; Three Co-ordinate Persons being manifestly three Gods; Indeed, some Kind of Subordination is necessarily implied in the very Idea of Paternity and Filiation. - But, this Subordination which we assert, is a Subordination, not of Nature and Substance, but only of personal Properties.

When the Son of God became Man, he did not cease to be what He BEFORE was; but assuming the perfect Nature of Man, subsisted thence forward also in the Human, who before subsisted ONLY in the Divine Nature.

The Properties of each Nature remained distinct, and acted agreeably to their own separate Characters: The Manhood was not absorbed of the Godhead; nor the Godhead transubstantiated into the Manhood: The Substances remained distinct; - The Natures still retained their own personal Properties; but the Subject of both these, was only ONE Person: - And, The UNION thus made, was never after dissolved.

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In the Course of this Life, the Divine Nature wrought the Miracles, and the Human suffered the Afflictions: - At the Time of his Death, when his human Soul and Body were divided, his Divine Nature, (tho' quiescent for a Season,) still continued with him.

The "Temple of his Body" destroyed by Death, himself by his Divinity, "after three Days, (according to the Scriptures,) raised up." - The Body fell, the human Soul was separated, but the Godhead restored the Fabrick, being still joined to it.

Otherwise it could not be true, what he averred, that Himself would raise it up, "having Power to lay it down, and to take it again."

No Disunion AFTERWARD ensued, because he ascended into Heaven with the SAME real Body, and "He shall so come-again in like Manner, as He was seen to go into Heaven."

This is the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, and his Incarnation on Earth. And,

The Reasons WHY we maintain that He was both God & Man, in One Person, are, That being MAN, he might suffer Death, which God could not; - and God, that He might subdue Death, which MAN could not; - MAN, that by suffering Death, he might make Atonement for Sin; and God, that by his

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Power he might apply it: - MAN, that human Transgressions might, (as strict Justice required,) be avenged and punished in THAT VERY Nature in which they were committed; and God, that a Satisfaction might be made by perfect Innocence, which no MERE Man was capable of rendering. {x}

The Manner, indeed, of this mysterious Union has always been treated-of with Caution, and the Prudence of Men hath induced them to rest satisfied with the Truth of the Matter, without curiously peying into the express Methods of it.

For Illustration's Sake, indeed, & to give Men's Understandings a clearer Notion of the Possibility of such an Union, some faint Resemblances of it have been found in things of created and finite Natures.

But, Amongst all, What hath met with the most general Reception, and seems to come nearest to the thing, which it is brought to illustrate, is,

"The Union of the Soul and Body," that compose the Man. - Here are Two distinct Substances, of very different Natures & Qualities, acting by their own distinct Faculties without being changed into each other, or absorbed by either. - Therefore,

"As the Reasonable Soul and Flesh is One Man, so God and Man is One Christ; equal to the Father

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(*) The Divinity of Christ is a Mystery, but it presents nothing that shocks the Understanding, or that implies the Shadow of a Contradiction. What do we believe? That God has united the human Nature to the Divine in the Person of Jesus Christ, in a Manner something like the Union of the Soul with the Body; we say that the Composition of Humanity and Divinity suffered in what was (under) ^{as} human

as touching his Godhead;" being the Only-Begotten of his Substance; "but Inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood." - as being born in due Time; "and who, altho' he be God and Man, yet is not, therefore, Two; but One Christ."

Athenagoras, (an ancient Christian Writer,) asserts that "the Father & the Son are One, the Son being in the Father, and the Father in the Son, by the Unity and Power of the Spirit;" and, that "the Prophetic Spirit is an Emanation from God, as Light is from the Sun." - And again, "We assert God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and declare their Power in Unity, and Difference in Order."

Here we plainly see, that all the Difference or Distinction between the Persons of the Trinity, is only of Order, NOT of Nature; and, in another Place He says, that "The Son is undivided from the Father;" and, therefore, he must be CONSUBSTANTIAL. Irenæus tells us that "God the Father and his WORD, is One and the Same God." - And, in another Place, "That there is only One God, the Creator, who made all things by Himself, (i.e.) by his WORD and his WISDOM;" which are the Names by which Irenæus expresses the SON & the HOLY GHOST; "For the WORD and WISDOM, the SON and SPIRIT, are

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and always present with Him, by whom He freely made all things; to whom He speaks, saying, "Let Us make Man after Our Image and Likeness;"

By which it is plain, that Irenaeus believed the Son to be Consubstantial with the Father, tho he does not directly make use of the Word: for, "if the Son be God himself, & One & the Same God with God the Father, (as begotten of him,) he must be of One & the Same Substance" "God of God, very God of very God, the Only-Begotten of the Father." But,

II. Another Proof, in Evidence of the Doctrine advanced, (included in the Words before us,) is, the high Honour whereby he is invested - "LET ALL THE ANGELS WORSHIP HIM."

Our Saviour is God, because he is the Object of Adoration; For, Nothing less than God can be the Object of it.

This is One of those Truths that seems almost so evident, that it needs not to be proved, - It is confirmed to us by the Authority both of Reason and Revelation, both of the Law and the Gospel. - For, what does the NATURAL Notion of Worship imply less, than an humble Application to a Being that is both able to hear us, & to help us? And consequently must have the Divine Perfections of Omnipotence and Omnipotence? And, Whatsoever Being hath

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these

these Perfections, is God. Hence we have this Precept both in the Old and New-Testament. - "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve."

Adoration is an Homage due only to the Most High & Supreme God : - being, therefore, directed to pay it to Christ, this must prove him Co-equal with the Father in the Divine Nature. - Indeed, It has so clear, and so inseparable a Relation to the Only-True God, as its proper Object, that it is scarce possible to apprehend how it should be separated from him, and given to any other. - And, as This seems evident from the Nature of things, so it is impossible to imagine how any thing could have been prohibited in more express and positive, and frequently repeated Words, and longer Reasonings, than the offering of Divine Worship, or any Part of it, to a Creature. - The chief Design of the Mosaical Religion was to banish all Idolatry and Polytheism out of the Minds of the Jews, and to possess them with the Idea of One God, and of One Object of Worship. - The Reasons upon which those Prohibitions are founded, are universal ; which are, the Unity of God's Essence, and his Jealousy in not giving his Honour to another.

It is not said that they should not worship any as God,

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God, till they had a Precept or Declaration for it; there is no Reserve for any such Time, but they are plainly forbid to worship any but the Great God, because he was One, and jealous of his Glory.

The New-Testament is writ in the same Strain. Christ's Adjunction is to "worship the Lord God only." The Apostles charged all Idolaters to forsake their Idols, and to serve the living God." - The Angel refused St. John's Worship, commanding him to "worship God." - The Christian Faith does in every Particular raise the Ideas of God and of Religion to a much greater Purity and Sublimity than the Mosaical Dispensation had done, so it is not to be imagined that in the chief Design of Revealed Religion, which was the bringing Men from Idolatry, to the Worship of One God, it should make such a Breach, and extend it to a Creature. - All this seems fully to prove the FIRST Proposition of this Argument [via] that "God is the only proper Object of Adoration." The next is, Christ is proposed in the New-Testament as the Object of Divine Worship. - We do not, in Proof of this, urge the Instances of those who fell down at Christ's Feet, & worshiped him, while he was on Earth; for, it may well be answered to that, that a Prophet was worshiped with the civil Respect of falling down before him, among the Jews; Serm. LVIII,

as appears in the History of Elijah and Elisha ; nor does it appear that those who worshiped Christ, had any Apprehension of his being God, they only considered him as the Messias, or some eminent Prophet. But, the Mention that St. Luke makes in his Gospel, of the Disciples WORSHIPING Christ, at his Ascension, comes nearer to this Matter.

In several Places of Holy Scripture we have particular Directions hereto ; St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, immediately points to it, and asserts that " Whosoever shall thus call on him, shall be saved."

This Passage alone, (especially in Conjunction with the Text,) is sufficient in Proof of it. Jesus, our Saviour, is here styled " LORD ; " - He is here, (as in the Words before us,) made the Object of Religious Adoration ; and Salvation, besides, is annexed to it.

The Context treats wholly of Christ ; Christ therefore, without Doubt, is the Person here spoken of, and is consequently the Object of Religious Invocation ; and the Man who desires to be " saved," must " call upon Him ; " - must " by Prayer and Supplication let his Requests be made known unto Him."

In the Apostolical Times, All Christians were supposed, by Virtue of their Profession, to invoke,

or *Idem.*

on call upon Christ their Saviour ; and were accordingly characterized by it.

Some Criticks tell us, that the Phrase, in its Original Language, is to be taken PASSIVELY, as denoting the Names of its Professors, CHRISTIANS : But this cannot be : For, the Name, CHRISTIAN, was not known in the World, till after the Conversion of St. Paul, when, (as St. Luke expressly assures us,) "The Disciples were called Christians first at Antioch :" Whereas, before that Time, they were distinguished by the Acts of their Devotion, as "Those who call'd on the Name of the Lord." - In Proof of which we find Origin, (who certainly understood the the force of a GREEK Participle, and its Import, as well, at least, any Modern Critick,) commenting on the Passage before us, (says,) "The Apostle, in these Words, declares Him to be God, whose Name was called upon."

The Argument, therefore, deduced from his Expression, stands-good, and admits of no Reply. - Divine Worship is to be paid to Christ our Lord ; for, "Whosoever shall call on his Name, shall be saved."

In this, the Command and Practice of the earliest Ages of Christianity, are pure and plain. (A)

"These

(A) *Commemoratio Antiquitatis, Authoritatem Orationis asserta in Fidem.*

-1050 These things, (says St. John,) have I written unto you, that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God. And, ¹ This is the Confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his Will, he heareth us; and if he hear us, then, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the Petitions we desired of him.

In another Part of this Epistle, the same Precept is repeated, (the Word God, being used instead of Christ,) "we have Confidence towards God", that whatever we ask, we receive of Him." — yd bidding to Whoever reads these two Passages, cannot hesitate, but must acknowledge that Christ, our Saviour, is "the God that heareth Prayer." — Accordingly, Christ, more effectually to encourage us to thisy most affectionately invites us to it. — "Hitherto, (says he,) have ye asked nothing in my Name; ask, and ye shall receive." — Indeed, He himself, when on Earth, rebuked not those who fell down before him and worshiped him, as the Angel rebuked John; & Peter, Cornelius, when the same Offers were made unto them. But further, In the Revelation, we find St. John representing to us the Whole Church Universal, with all the Angelick Intelligences ascribing all Honour unto him "Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, and

proved from the Divine Worship paid to him. 32

Might be unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb, forever." And well as "In olden times, the Will of God is duly performed, and "all Men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And "Shall we on Earth deny him the Tributes of Praise which is due unto him & God forbid. In a Word, Christ is proposed as the Object of our Faith, and Hope, and Love;—as the Person whom we are to obey, to pray to, and praise. So that every Act of Worship, both external and internal, is directed to him, as to its proper Object.

Thus stands the Scripture-Evidence, respecting the Worship of God the Son. — And, The Practice of the Apostles and Disciples, and primitive Christians, we find, were conformable to it.

All those Salutations in the Beginning and Conclusion of the Epistles, in which "Grace, Mercy & Peace," are wished "from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," are implied Invocations of him. Sometimes the Name of Christ stands in the FIRST Order, "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion, (or Fellowship,) of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

This seems to be a strong Reversing of Things, if they are not equal as to their Essence or Substance.

Serm. LVIII,

It

It is true, The Second is not named here, "The Father," as elsewhere, but only God; yet since he is mentioned as distinct from Christ, and the Holy Ghost, it must be understood of the Father; for, when the Father is named with Christ, He is sometimes called "God" simply, and sometimes "God the Father." But, Now & al. bidot
the instance of all others, that is the clearest in
this Point, is, in the last Words of St. Stephen, who
was the first Martyr, and whose Martyrdom is so
particularly related by St. Luke; He, in his last Mi-
nutes, saw Christ "at the Right-Hand of God," &
in his last Breath he worshiped him in two short
Prayers, that are upon the Matter, the same with
those in which our Blessed Saviour worshiped his
Father on the Cross; - "Lord Jesus, receive my
Spirit :" - "Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge."
From this, it is very evident, that if Christ was
not the true God, and equal to the Father, then This
Proto-Martyr died in two Acts, that seem not only
Idolatrous, but also Blasphemous; since he worshiped
Christ in the same Acts in which Christ had wor-
shipped his Father.

That this Worship was not given to Christ, on
Account of any Angelick Nature inherent in him,
St. Paul fully teaches, who not only preferred Christ

to Angels, but also less him in Opposition to them, as One of another Order of Beings, "made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they." &c. This Opposition is likewise carried on in the succeeding Chapter ; one Passage in it being most express to shew both that his Nature had a Subsistence before his Incarnation, & that it was not of an Angelical Order of Beings , since " He took not on Him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham."

The Conceit, then, of Christ's being of an Angelical Nature, is very fully condemned.

From this the Apostle goes next to the Notion of his being to be honoured because he was an eminent Prophet; on which he enters with a very solemn Preface, inviting them to " consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession :" He then compares Moses to him, as to the Point of being " faithful to him who had appointed him :" But , how eminent soever Moses was, above all other Prophets , and how harshly soever it must have sounded to the Jews to have stated the Difference in Terms so distant as that of a Servant and a Son, of one who BUILT the House, & the House itself: Yet we see the Apostle does not only prefer Christ to Moses , but puts him in another Order & Rank; which could not be

done according to the Socinian Hypothesis. - From all which this Conclusion naturally follows, [viz.] That if Christ is to be worshiped, & that this Honour belongs to him, neither as an Angel, nor as a Prophet; That then it is due to him because he is truly God.

It is certain from all this Deduction of Particulars, That Christ's human Nature cannot be worshiped; therefore, there must be another Nature in Him, to which Divine Worship is due; and, on the Account of which he is to be worshiped.

It is plain, that when this Religion was first published, together with these Duties in it as a Part of it, the Jews, tho' implacably set against it, yet never accused it of Idolatry; tho' That Charge, of all others, would have served the best, who intended to blast it. Nothing would have been so well heard, & so easily apprehended, as a just Prejudice against it, as this. The Argument would have appeared as strong as it was plain: &c, as the Jews could not be ignorant of the Acts of the Christian Worship, when so many fell-back to them from it, who were offended at other Parts of it; so they had the Books in which it was contained; particularly the Gospel of St. John, who designedly wrote the History of our Saviour, purposedly to supply the Deficiency of former

the old historians and to establish his Divinity (A), in their own Hands. Notwithstanding all this, we have all probable Reason to believe that this Objection against it was never made by any of them, in the first Age of Christianity: Upon all which it is not to be imagined that they could have been silent on this Head, if a mere Man had been thus proposed among the Christians as the Object of Divine Worship. — The Silence of the Apostles in not mentioning, nor answering this, is such a Proof of the Silence of the Jews, that it would, indeed, discredit all their Writings, if we could think that while they mentioned and answered the other Prejudices of the Jews, which, in Comparison to this, are small and inconsiderable Matters, they should pass over This, which must have been the greatest, and most plausible of them all, if it had ever been produced.

As the Silence of the Apostles, therefore, is a clear Proof that the Jews were silent also, and did not object this, and since their Silence could neither flow from their Ignorance, nor their undervaluing of this Religion, it seems to be very certain, that the FIRST opening of the Christian Doctrine, did not carry any thing

(A) Nothing can be more plain and positive than his first Opening. — "In the Beginning was the WORD, and the Word was with God, and the Word was GOD." &c. — Serm. LVIII.

thing in it that could be called the worship of the Creature. It follows from hence, that the Jews must have understood This Part of our Religion in such a Manner as agreed with their former Ideas: For, they had This settled among them, that God dwelt in the Cloud of Glory, and that by Virtue of that Inhabitation, Divine Worship was paid to God as dwelling in the Cloud; that it was called "God's" - "God's Throne" - "his Holiness" - "his Face;" and "the Light of his Countenance:" - They went up to the Temple to worship God, as dwelling there bodily (i.e.) Substantially, for so bodily sometimes signifies, or in a Corporeal Appearance.

It was also one of the Prophecies received by the Jews, "that the Glory of the SECOND Temple was to exceed the Glory of the FIRST. The chief Character of the Glory of the First, was That Inhabitation of the Divine Presence among them: From hence it follows that such Inhabitation of God in a Creature, by which that Creature was not only called God, but that Adoration was due to it upon that Account; was a Notion that could not have offended the Jews, and was, indeed, the only Notion that agreed with, their former Ideas, and which could have been received by them without Difficulty or Opposition.

This is a strong Inducement to believe that this
great

proved from the Divine Worship paid to him. 327

great Article of Religion was at that Time delivered and understood in That Sense.

Stetson

“...mid night he awoke and said, ‘I am not fit to live.’”

The following table gives the results of the experiments made at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1905 to 1908, on the effect of various treatments on the growth of the plant. The plants were grown in pots containing soil from the same locality, and were treated with different amounts of water, fertilizer, and lime. The results show that the plants grew best under conditions of moderate moisture and light fertilization, and that they suffered from both over-watering and under-watering.

SERMON LX.

On the same Subject.

Heb. i. 6. "When He bringeth-in the First-Begotten into the World, He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him."

Having already proved, (under these Words,) the Divinity of Christ, both from his Generation from the Father, & from the Divine Worship, (peculiarly belonging to the Divine Being,) here required to be paid to Him ; I shall further confirm the Doctrine advanced, from the Testimonies of the ancient Christian Fathers in the Case, And from the Divine Properties given to Christ in the Scriptures, with the Testimonies therin expressed concerning him.

As to the Practice of the PRIMITIVE Christians, we have a remarkable Instance that offers itself, very early, in the Case of Polycarp, (Bishop of Smyrna,) He joins God the Father, and the Son together, in his Prayers for Grace & Benediction upon Men.

And

And, when he was about to act the last Scene of his Life, at his Martyrdom, he concluded his last Prayer with a Doxology to the Whole TRINITY.

As he had been a Disciple of John the Evangelist, we cannot well suppose him ignorant of the proper Object of religious Worship. Accordingly we find him in the Possession of the Doctrine of a CO-ETERNAL and CO-ETERNAL Trinity: a Doctrine, in which we may venture to affirm, he was rightly instructed.

Ignatius, (Bishop of Antioch,) suffered for the Faith, fifty Years before Polycarp, & had conversed familiarly with many of the Apostles: — He begins One of his Epistles in the following Manner — “I glorify Jesus Christ, our God, who hath given to thee this Wisdom.” Now, most absurd indeed could such Men as These be (instructed by the Apostles themselves,) be mistaken in the Capital Article of all Religion, the Object of Divine Worship. It is impossible.

Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the Second Century, declares to the Pagans, that the Object of Christian Worship, was the Whole Trinity: “We worship & adore, (says he,) the God of Righteousness, and his Son, & the Holy Spirit of Prophecy.”

(A) Twenty two Pages being added after Page 209, are here allowed for.

Prophecy. — And yet, a little further, He tells the Emperors, "We hold it unlawful to worship any but God alone."

So Origen, who lived in the former Part of the Third Century, "We worship & adore no Creature, but the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The earliest Christians professed to worship God alone; but they constantly and uniformly professed to worship Christ, as they deemed him to be very and true God.

The same is to be said with Regard to the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit.

How the Son was begotten of the Father; or How the Spirit proceeds from Both; is above and beyond us: — The Mode we have nothing to do with; it cannot be the Object of our Reasonings. — We are not now engag'd in the thorny Paths of the Subject; — A plain Matter of Fact is before us; and the Premises are thereby fixed "firm as the everlasting Hills."

Many Instances occur in the History of Eusebius where the dying Martyrs addressed their Prayers to Christ, under the highest Titles and Attributes of the Divinity, as "The LIVING and TRUE God,"

"The GREAT King over all the Earth" — "Omniscient

serene & Almighty" — "The Son of God ; & Himself very and true God." — And, — as such, (faith Busebius,) the highest Powers on Earth, confessed and adored him.

Such was the Practice of the Christian Church respecting the Worship of its Saviour, from the very Beginning, and during the Three First Ages of Christianity, long before Arianism appeared in the World.

What shall we say, then, to these things? Indeed, what can we say, but that He, whom, (when first introduced into the World,) the Angels were commanded to worship : — He, to the Invocation of whose Name Salvation is promised — He, whose Name his Disciples, before they were called Christians, invoked — He, in whose Name the Apostles were accustomed to give their Benedictions, & concerning whom, St. John says, that "Whatever we ask of him, according to his Will, he heareth us ; and that we shall have the Petitions we desired of him" — He, who was worshipped by Men, whilst on Earth, without reproving them for it ; and to whom, in Heaven, all the whole Creation of God, give Glory and Honour — He, whom the Church universal professed from the Beginning to adore ; & into whose Hands

Serm. LX.

the

the dying Martyrs committed their departing Spirits — He, to whose Service & Worship, with that of the Father, and the Holy Ghost, every Christian is dedicated in Baptism, that this Person is truly, (what St. Paul styles him,) “**God OVER ALL, BLESSED FOREVER.**”

The Son was worshiped before he entered upon the Work of Redemption.—He had Glory with the Father before the Foundation of the World, for he existed in the Form of God before he was found in the Fashion of Man. — And, being God from Everlasting, He will be worshiped to Everlasting, when his Mediatorial Kingdom, as Messiah, shall be at an End. Indeed,

It hath been asserted that the Worship of Christ is inconsistent with his Office of Mediator ; But why?

It seems rather to be implied, than excluded ; since a Mediator must communicate with both Parties ; And, our Method of communicating with Christ, can only be by praying to him.

To withhold Prayer, then, from our Saviour, is impious Perverseness ; And, (considering the great things He hath done for us,) to withhold Praise and Thanksgiving from him, would be equal Ingratitude.

Angels, we see, (Creatures of far higher Order,) were

were commanded to worship him; - With what Reverence and Respect, then, should we approach before him! having our Hearts and Minds filled with the most awful Sense of his Divine Majesty, and overflowing with Gratitude for his amazing Humiliation from thence, for us Men & for our Salvation!

"In all things, therefore, by Prayer and Supplication let our Requests be made known unto him," and let us "Praise him according to his excellent Greatness;" for, He is a powerful, as well as merciful High-Priest. And, as "he cannot but be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; so he is able to save to the utmost those who come to God by him."

But, From these Instances, which are so numerous; and this Evidence so full in the Matter, the Adversaries of the Doctrine before us, are forced to own, "that there is a Super-eminent & Divine Honour and Worship due to the Son of God; tho' at another Time, they affirm "that God the Father alone is to be primarily worshiped and adored; or, in the most proper Sense and in the highest Manner." — Hence implying, (as we must understand,) that the Worship due to our Saviour is an inferior Sort of Worship, and not called so in the most proper Sense. — But, they should tell us what the Difference is between the Worship due to the Son, and

to the Father; For, since they allow the same Acts of Worship to Both, and say that "proper Adoration, direct and distinct Invocation and Thanksgiving is due to the Son, as well as to the Father." Here seems to be a Distinction without a Difference. For, we would willingly know, whether "proper Adoration, direct and distinct Invocation, and Thanksgiving" is not that Sort of Worship, which we are forbade, in the Old and New-Testament to give to any but God: If it is, then the giving it to our Saviour proves him truly God; If it is not, then the giving it to a Creature is not Idolatry, since it does not offend against that Law, by which Idolatry is forbidden. But,

Did not St. Paul, (who had been brought up in the Knowledge of the Jewish Law,) understand either That, or Christianity? Who at Lystra refused the Divine Honours that were designed, tho they did not, (tis supposed,) offer him the Supreme Worship neither, as they called Barnabas Jupiter, & Him only Mercurius; - But, instead of that, "ran in among the People crying-out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are Men of like Passions with you, and preach unto you, that you should turn from these Vanities, to serve the Living God;"

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The same Argument, (if the opposite Opinion be true,) must hold equally against the Worship of our Saviour; since according to their Notions, He was a Man of like Passions with us, being, when he was incarnate, liable to Temptations even in his Divine Nature, as the Rational Sonk is tempted in other Men, by partaking of the Temptations of the Body.

If it should be said, that they own our Saviour to be truly "God and Lord," and, therefore, the Object of Adoration; it must be confessed they do call him so: but in their ~~ELUSIVE~~ Way they explain it thus, that "he is really, by the Appointment of the Father, our God and our Lord." But,

If this be all the Divinity they allow Him, (i.e.) to be our God by Appointment, He can be only our God in such a Sense as Moses was a God to Pharaoh, or to the Israelites, (i.e.) commissioned by God to act in his Name, and consequently can have no greater Right to our Worship, than Moses had to theirs. And, if this be a good Consequence, St. Paul must have been too-scrupulous in refusing the Worship of the Lystrians; and the Angel, in the Revelation, did not understand either our Religion or Himself, who, when St. John offered to worship him, said, "See thou do it not: for, I am thy Fellow-Servant, and of thy Brethren the Prophets, and of them which

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keep

keep the Sayings of this Book : WORSHIP GOD."

But, "A God, only by Appointment, created, and far inferior to the Father, in Nature, Attributes and Perfections," is a strange, perplexed, inconsistent Account of our Saviour's Divinity, (if we may so call it,) and liable to more Objections than any Mystery of Christianity.

"A CREATED God" is a direct Contradiction, and just as good Sense, as an Uncreated Creature. The Notion of a God necessarily implies Infinite Perfections, Eternal Existence, and Unbounded Power; The Notion of a Creature a limited Power, and a precarious Being. - And therefore,

If Jesus Christ was created, he cannot be truly God ; and if he be truly God, he could not have been created. - For, we would gladly know, was Jesus Christ truly God, and capable of Adoration because he was created with those super-eminent Perfections of Knowledge and Power, superior to all other Creatures ? — If so ; then the Angels must be Gods too, and may be worshiped, because they are created with the Perfections of Knowledge and Power, superior to ours ; - and not only so, but by this Argument, every Man of good Understanding or great Strength is a God to the foolish and weak ; and then we unjustly blame or censure the Weakness and V-

sity of these Men, who have received Divine Honour.

Besides these Proofs, already, in Favour of the Doctrine advanced, we find innumerable others, confirming the same.

Christ, by the Apostle, is not only preferred to Angels, but is set in Opposition to them, as One of another Order of Beings, "made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they." — Again,

In the Form of Baptism, (Matt. 28, 19.) He is joined with Such, as are confessedly of a Divine Nature, The Father, and the Holy Ghost.

The Plainness of the Charge, and the great Occasion upon which it was given, makes this Argument of such Force and Evidence, that it may justly determine the Whole Matter.

All the Names, the Operations, and even the Attributes of God, are not only in FULL and PLAIN Words given to Christ in Scripture; but really exemplified in him. — He is expressly stiled, God, in many Places (A). — His Blood is said to be the Blood

of

(A) This is an Argument excepted against by the Writers of controversy, who bring a Number of Texts out of the Old and New Testament, where Angels and Men, and the Gods of the Heathen, are called Gods. But,

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There

of God;" — "God is said to have laid down his Life

There is One Place, which, if they had produced entire, would have given a full Answer to this Objection: It is This, — "For there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth, (as there be Gods many, and Lords many,) Yet, to us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." — In which Place it is plain that our Saviour Jesus Christ is excepted out of the Number of "those many," who, in a loose, general, or figurative Sense, are called Gods and Lords; and therefore is called God and Lord in that proper Sense, in which it is here affirmed, that "there is but One God, and One Lord." And,

That this was the Sense of the primitive Fathers, appears from Irenæus, in whose Days, it seems, there were some Hereticks made the same Objection; and therefore, he has bestowed several Pages in answering it. page, 208. Col. I.

As to those Titles in Scripture, which are so often applied to God, the Son, as well as the other Epithets, Descriptions & Appellations, they are such, as cannot agree to any created Being. — He is called in Isai. — "Wonderful, - Councillor, - the mighty God, - the everlasting Father, - the Prince of Peace."

In the 1. Cor. "The Lord of Glory;" — "The Lord from Heaven." — In Titus, "The great God." — In St. John, "the True God." And, in the Rev. "King of Kings, and Lord of Lord," and "Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last."

The last Text I shall mention, is in Rom. — The Words are these, " — Of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever."

As the Son has no other Beginning of his Divinity than the Father, but is the most pure Emanation of that One Paternal Fountain; therefore, Christ is God over all. Now,

He that is "over all" must have None above him. For, He is not after the Father, but of the Father. If therefore, the Son is said to be

**Life for us ;' Christ is "called the true God," "the
GREAT**

overall; and the Holy Ghost to contain all things; and God the Father is He, of whom are all things; here it evidently shewn the Nature of the Trinity, and One Substance, which is over all.

To these Testimonies of Scripture, the Fathers are express. — Our Saviour is affirmed by Origin, to be *God from the Beginning*: and to be *unmade*; and, in other Places, he is called *the immutable and immortal God*.

He is called by Hermas and Theophilus of Antioch, *The Counsellor of God*; too-high a Title, surely, for a Creature.

By Ignatius, he is called, *The Invisible, the Impassible, who for our sakes became visible and passible*. Which Epithets are given Him also by Irenaeus; who, in the same Place, says, He was *Incomprehensible, but was made Comprehensible*. Ignatius too, in another Place, asserts his Diviniscence.

In the Book, called *The Testimonies of the Twelve Patriarchs*, (supposed to be writ in the First Century, and allowed as good Authority;) we have, among others, these remarkable Testimonies — In one Place, He is called, *The Lord, the Great God of Israel, and save Adam, in another Place, the Sufferings of our Saviour are called, The Passion of the Highest. And his Appearance, The Coming of the God of Righteousness*. Again, *The Highest shall visit the Earth, himself coming as Man, eating and drinking among Men. and afterwards, Then shall we rise every one upon his Scepter, worshiping the King of Heaven, who appeared on Earth in the Form of humble Man*.

The next Testimony I shall produce, is from Melito, (Bishop of Sardis,) of whom there are left only some Fragments; Part of one of which I shall here transcribe: "The Works of Christ, after his Baptism, and especially his Miracles, declared and fully proved to the World his Divinity, concealed in the Flesh. For, himself being at the same Time, God, and a perfect Man, He fully proved to us the Existence of his two Natures: His Divinity by those Miracles, which

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God^y, the "Lord of Glory"—the "King of Kings."
 TAKEN

"he wrought in the three Years after his Baptism ; and his Humanity in those thirty Years, which were before it; wherein, as to the "Flesh, he concealed the Signs of his Divinity, although He was truly "God before the World began."

His Two Natures, his Divinity and his Humanity, cannot, (we think,) be more fully or clearly asserted; accordingly, Irenaeus expressly says, *that He is truly Man, and that He is truly God.*

In a Word, The Divinity of Christ is asserted in as high Terms as can well be imagined. But,

Besides these Testimonies, There is one Consideration which sufficiently shows the Sense of the Fathers upon this Head, since they all agree that it was our Saviour that appeared to the Patriarchs and Moses; and is, in the Old-Testament, called *Yehovah*, and *The Lord of Hosts*: The known Titles of the Supreme God; and therefore, they must believe that to Him these Titles are truly applicable.

I have here only produced some of those Passages, which do most fully prove our Saviour's Divinity, without taking Notice of that Multitude of Places, where he is barely called *God*: and which, to a Person that considers it without Prejudice, must be unanswerable; especially when they call him so, absolutely, without any Limitation or Restriction, in many Places where they cannot be supposed to speak figuratively, but must be thought to speak the most accurately & properly they could, as arguing against Infidels and Heretics, and as delivering the Rule of Faith, and Summery of the Christian Doctrine.

To suppose them upon these Occasions, to call a Person *God*, that they believed not to be properly so, looks more like the Artifice of a Deceiver, than the Simplicity of a primitive Christian.

I have been the rather particular in this, because we have been asked to show, where our Saviour, either in Scripture or Antiquity, is called *The True God*, or the *Only God*, or by any of the known Titles of the Supreme God, as *God the Creator*; - *The invisible God*; - *The Great God*; or *The God over all*.

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and "the Lord of Lords;" and, more particularly, the Name JEHOVAH is ascribed to him in the same Word, in which the LXX Interpreters had translated it throughout the whole Old-Testament.

So that this constant Uniformity of Style between the Gospels of the New, and that Translation of the Old-Testament, (which was then received, and was of great Authority among the Jews, and was of more Authority among the First Christians,) is an Argument that carries such Weight with it, that this alone may serve to determine the Matter.

The Creating, - the Preserving, & the Governing of all things, is also ascribed to Christ, in a Variety of Places.

As "He was God; so He was in the Beginning with God (A), - "His Throne was from Everlasting,

The Proofs already given are a sufficient Answer to these things. But, supposing there could be no other Instances brought, where the other Titles, besides that of God, are given him, it would only follow, that those Titles, which are generally given to the Father, & not to the Son, were designed to express the Distinction of Persons; not the Difference of Nature; which is One and the Same.

(A) These Words are set down here, before St. John comes to speak of Christ's being made in our Nature. This Passage, therefore, belongs to another precedent Being that he had. The Beginning also is here set to denote, that it was before Creation or Time. Now, a Dissertation

Sitting," being "The Ancient of Days," and "First-born before Time, is eternal." And, of this *WORD*, it is likewise said, that *He was with God, and was God.*

The Words, then, are very plain, and the Place where they are put by St. John, in the Front of his Gospel, (as it were an Inscription upon it, or an Introduction to it,) makes it very evident, that He, who, of all the Writers in the New-Testament, has the greatest Plainness and Simplicity of Style, would not have put Words here, as were not to be understood in a plain and literal Signification, without any Key to lead us to any other Sense of them. This had been to lay a Stone of Stumbling, in the very Entrance of the Whole; particularly to the Jews, who were apt to cavil at Christianity; and were exceeding jealous of every thing that favoured of Idolatry, or of a Plurality of Gods. Is it to be conceived that he should use so many sublime and lofty Expressions concerning Christ, as God, if all these must be taken down to so low a Sense, as to signify *only* that He was *miraculously* formed, and endued with an *extraordinary* Power of working Miracles, and an Authority to deliver a *New Religion* to the World; - and that he was, in Consideration of his exemplary Death, (which he underwent so patiently,) raised-up from the Grave, and had divine Honours conferred upon him?

In such an Hypothesis as this, (the World, going-in so naturally to the expensive Magnifying, and even the Deifying of worldly Men,) it had been necessary to have prevented any such Mistakes, and to have guarded against the Belief of them; rather than to have used a continued Strain of Expressions, that seem to carry Men violently into them, and that can hardly be softened, by all the Skill of Criticism, to bear any other Sense.

It is to be considered further, that when St. John writ his Gospel, there were *Three Sorts* of Men particularly to be considered. The Jews, who could bear nothing that favoured of Idolatry; so no Stumbling-Block was to be laid in their Way, to give them deeper Prejudices against Christianity. Next to these, were the Gentiles; who ha-

born of every Creature." — As " He was God; so
He

ing worship'd a Variety of Gods, were not to be indulg'd in any thing that might seem to favour their Polytheism. In Fact, We find particular Caution used in the New-Testament, against the worshiping Angels or Saints : How can it therefore be imagined, that Words would have been used, that, in the plain Signification that did arise out of the first hearing of them, import'd that a Man was God, if this had not been strictly true? The Apostles ought, and must have used a particular Care to avoid all such Expressions, if they had not been literally true. — The Third Sort of Men in St. John's Time, were those of whom Intimation is frequently given thro' all the Epistles, who were then endeavouring to corrupt the Purity of the Christian Doctrine, & to accommodate it so, both to the Jew and to the Gentile, as to avoid the Cross and Persecution upon the Account of it.

Church-History and the earliest Writers after St. John, assure us, that Ebion and Cerinthus denied the Divinity of Christ, and asserted that he was a mere Man. Controversy naturally carries Men to speak exactly; and among human Writers, those who publish more easily, when they apprehend no Danger or Difficulty, are more correct both in their Thoughts and in their Expressions, when things are disputed; and therefore, if we should have no other Regard to St. John, but as an ordinary, cautious, and careful Man, we must believe that he weighed all his Words in that Point, which was then the Matter in Question; and to clear which, we have good Ground to believe, both from the Testimony of ancient Writers, and from the Method that he uses quite thro' it all, that he w^rote his Gospel; and that therefore every Part of it, but this Beginning of it more especially, was writ, so as to be understood in the Sense whish the Words naturally import: viz] that the " Word which took Flesh," and assumed the human Nature, had a Being " before the Worlds were made, and that This Word was God, and made all things."

In Proof of which, we find that Nonnus, the antient Paraphrast of Serm. LX.

St.

"He was in the Beginning with God, & the World was made by him ; and without him was not any thing."

St. John's Gospel , (by Way of Explication of what is meant by his being "in the Beginning,") adds, that He was *ἄρχος*, without Time, (i.e.) before all Time. And, if so, then he was from all Eternity.

"In the Beginning was the Word , " (i.e.) when things began to be made, He was ; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exist before all things were made ; and consequently is without Beginning ; for that which was never made, could have no Beginning of its Being : so the Jews used to describe Eternity, "before the World was, and before the Foundation of the World," as also in several Places of the New-Testament . So likewise Solomon describes the Eternity of Wisdom, (see Prov. 8. 22, 23, &c.) and so Justin Martyr explaining this very Expression of St. John , that " He was , or had a Beginning before all Ages." Again,

Speaking of God's appearing to Moses, and calling himself " I am," or, *εγώ*, (as it is in the Septuagint,) says, " Plato borrowed his Notions of God from hence, & therefore calls him *τὸ εστίν*, "that which is :" Upon which he makes this Observation , [viz] " That both the One, and the Other appears to agree to God , that always existed ; for, He is the only Eternal Being . Now,

We know that all the Fathers , (as we have observed,) and particularly Justin Martyr , thought the Person that appeared to Moses , to be the Son of God ; and therefore , it is plain he believed him eternal . And indeed, in another Place, he directly calls Him *Οὐρανὸς ἀπόλυτος*, "He who was from the Beginning , and *Οὐρανὸς αἰών* , " He that always existed."

Ignatius , in his Epistle ad Magnes , C. 3. calls him *Αὐτὸς αἰών*, "the eternal Word."

Athenagoras , a most antient Christian Writer, styles him *Αὐτὸν*, " He that was not made ." " For God , being an eternal Mind, had the Word in himself from the Beginning , " [i.e.] from all Eternity ,

" for

all E-

"thing made, that was made." (A) "By Him were

all

"for he was eternally rational :" which may serve as a Comment upon this first Verse of St John's Gospel. "In the Beginning was the Word," is the same as "from the Beginning," and therefore, from all Eternity.

That he is called , in the Rev. "Alpha and Omega , - The First and the Last," is already shewn : Now, if he be the First, He can have none before him ; and consequently, must be Eternal.

Theophilus, (Bishop of Antioch,) says, that "He was always implanted in the Heart of God , as being his Counsellor before any thing was made." Hermas says much the same, [viz.] "He is ancienter than any Creature , inasmuch as He was in Council with his Father at the Creation of all things ."

Irenæus frequently and fully asserts his Eternity. He calls him in one Place, "The eternal Word of God ;" and blames those who assign him a Beginning . In another Place he expresseth himself thus , "Thou art not unmade , O Man , nor didst Thou always exist with God, as his Own Word ." And , in another Place he speaks thus , "We have shut-out all the Contradiction of those who say , If therefore Christ was born , He did not exist before. For , we have shewn , that the Son of God did not then begin to be , since He existed always with the Father ."

(A) This could not have been more emphatically expressed than it is here by the Evangelist, after the Manner of the Hebrews; who, when they would say any thing with the greatest Force and Certainty , are wont to express it both affirmatively and negatively ; As , "He shall live, and not die," &c. (i.e) He shall most assuredly live : So here , "All Things were made by him , & without him was not any thing made that was made," (i.e) He made all Creatures without Exception, and consequently He himself is not a Creature , because it is evidently impossible for any thing to make itself : But then , If He be , and yet was never made, it is most certainly true that He always was, even from all Eternity .

Serm. LX.

all things created , that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, Visible and Invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers ; all things were created by him, and for him : & He is before all things, and by Him all things consist ." — Omnipotence and Omniscience were peculiarly his : (A) — He is said to have " known what

was

(A) The Power of Working Miracles , - and the Spirit of Prophecy which rested in Him, do fully prove this. The greatest Enemies to Him and our holy Religion , confess , that our Saviour did many wonderful Things, tho' they attributed them to the Power of the Devil. He healed all Manner of Diseases in Multitudes of People, by a Touch or Word , and that sometimes upon those at a Distance . The most desperate Diseases submitted to his Power : He restored Sight to a Man born blind : He made the Woman straight that had been bowed together eighteen Years : and the Man that had an Infirmity thirty-eight Years, he bids take-up his Bed and walk : He multiplied a few Loaves and Fishes for the feeding of some Thousands : and he raised several from the Dead , particularly Lazarus , after he had been dead four Days in the Grave. And,

Tho' each of these miraculous Operations was performed also by his Apostles and Followers ; yet is there this manifest Difference, that *He* wrought by his own single Power , with a Breath of his Lips , and in his own Name ; *they* by Prayer, Faith, and in the Name of this their Master, the Lord Jesus. We may observe also this further Distinction, [viz] that there was yet One, (and that not the least remarkable) Power resident in Christ , which was never communicated even to the Apostles themselves, [viz] the Power of searching into the very Hearts of Men , and becoming acquainted with their most dark & concealed Resolves, the very Moment they conceived them. This, we no where find

"was in Man" - to have "known all things." That "as the Father was known of none, but of the Sons

ind to be manifested by any Man, either Prophet or Apostle, and therefore appears to be not only an Attribute, (an universally acknowledged,) but an incommunicable Attribute of the Divinity.

Another Evidence we are supplied with in this Case, is, from Child's solemn and authoritative Manner of proceeding in most of his Miracles, which differed greatly from that of the Prophets, and holy Men of Old, who acted as second Causes only, under the Influence of God. "O Lord, my God, I pray Thee, (saith Elijah,) let this Child's soul come into him again." Our Blessed Saviour, in the same Circumstances, faith only, — "Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise." " Lazarus, Come forth." There is evidently here much more of the Air of the Supreme Majesty, than of any of the most exalted of created Beings. God said in the Beginning, "Let there be Light, and there was Light." — "I will; - Be thou clean: (saith Jesus to the Leper,) and immediately his Leprosy was cleansed." — "Peace, - Be still;" was sufficient to hush the most tempestuous Sea, into a Calm; — And "With Authority he commanded even the unclean Spirits, and they obeyed him."

All these Miracles He wrought publickly in the midst of his Enemies; and indeed, they were so publick & so undeniable, that the Apostle appeals to the Jews themselves, declaring that "Jesus of Nazareth was a Man approved of God among them by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew." But, The great Miracle of his Resurrection exceeded them all.

As to Prophecy; He fore-told his own Death, with the Manner of it, & the Circumstances of his Sufferings; the Treachery of Judas; the Cowardice of his Disciples, & St. Peter's denying him; - his own Resurrection, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost in miraculous Gifts. He prophesied of the Destruction of Jerusalem, which came to pass in

Serm. LX.

"for no one knoweth the Son, but the Father." He pardons Sins, - sends the Spirit, - gives Grace and eternal Life, and will raise the Dead at the Last Day.

Now, All these are Characters inseparable from the Deity, and consequently therefore, as they are ascribed to Christ, and were found inherent in him, they must prove that He was very God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten from Everlasting.

When all these things are laid-together, in that Variety of Expressions in which they lie scattered in the New Testament, it is not possible to retain any Reverence for those Books, if we imagine they were writ in a Style so full of Approaches to the Deifying of a mere Man, that without a very critical studying of Languages and Phrases, (and even with it,) it is not possible to understand them otherwise.

"So forty Years after his own Death, within the Compass of that Generation, as he had fore-told; The very Foundations of the Temple and City were destroyed, and the Ground plowed up, 'so that there was not left one Stone upon another that was not thrown down ;' according to our Saviour's Prediction : And indeed, the Signs that he foretold should fore-run the Destruction of that City, with the Circumstances that came with it, and followed after, exactly agree with that punctual and credible History of the Fact related by Josephus. And He assured his Disciples, that his Gospel should be published in all Nations, and that his Religion should prevail against all the Opposition of worldly Power and Malice ; and that 'the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it.'

"So that Two whole and perfect Natures (that is
"to say,) the Godhead & Manhood , were joined to-
gether in One Person, never to be divided ; where-
of is One Christ, very God, and very Man."

In Confirmation of the Doctrine already advanced, respecting the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, and his Existence with the Father from Everlasting, it may be necessary to cite some of the many express Declarations of Scripture , which assert the Son of God to have been in Heaven with God , and Partaker with Him in his Glory , before his Incarnation and Appearance in the World. [viz]

"No Man hath ascended into Heaven , but He
"that came down from Heaven , even the Son of
"Man, who is in Heaven."

The Son is here said to have "come-down from Heaven , " in Respect of the Union of his Divinity with human Nature, and his special Residence here below : and yet , he is said so to have "come-down from Heaven , " as still "to be in Heaven," (i.e) in Respect of his Divinity, by which he is every where present : And, He that "came-down from Heaven," is here called , "the Son of Man," by the same Figure that his Blood is elsewhere called , "the Blood of God ." (Acta, 20, 28.) The Apostle ascribing to

Serm. LX.

One

One Nature what is proper to the Other: This, we take to be the most natural and easy Sense of this Text, and most agreeable to the Tenor of the New Testament. Again,

" What , and if ye see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" So that if he really ascended up into Heaven after his Resurrection, He was really there before his Incarnation.

Again, " Before Abraham was, I am." Again,

It is said that " Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his Hands , and that he was come from God , and went to God." Again,

" The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, & have believed that I came out from God ." — " I came-forth from the Father , and am come into the World ; again , I leave the World, and go to the Father."

This was so very plain , that his Disciples , who were slow of Apprehension in other things , yet understood this so well , that hereon they were convinced of his Omnipotence , (which is an incomminicable Property of the Divinity ,) for so it immediately follows, " his Disciples said unto him ; Lord, now speakest thou plainly , and speakest no Pro-
verb :

"verb : - Now we are sure that thou knowest all
"things , and needest not that any Man should ask
"Thee ; by this we believe that Thou camest forth
"from God."

So that either this , which hath been already declared , must be the real Meaning of our Saviour's Words , or else his Disciples were grossly mistaken , and did not understand him : and , if so , our Saviour surely would have corrected their Mistake , and have set them right in the Matter . But , so far is he from doing That , that he allows them to have understood him aright ; for thus it follows , - " Jesu answered them , Do ye now believe ?" As if he had said , "I am glad that ye are at last convinced , and do believe that I came from God , and must return to him , and that I know all things , which none but God can do ."

Now , is it possible for any Man to read this Passage , and yet not be convinced that the Disciples understood our Saviour to speak literally ? Again ,

" And now , O Father , glorifie me with thine own self , with the Glory which I had with thee , before the World was ." And again , a little after ,

" I have given them the Words which Thou gavest me , and they have received them , and known assuredly that I came from Thee , and that Thou didst send me ."

Serm. LX. To

To the foregoing Testimony of our Saviour in the Case, I shall only add, (as above all things conclusive,) his solemn Oath, in Confirmation of it : for, When Pilate " adjured him by the Living God," (the Form of Swearing among the Jews,) " to tell them whether He was the Christ, the Son of God? " Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said :" And then proceeds to speak of his future Dignity , in " sitting at the Right-Hand of God, and coming " in the Clouds of Heaven." Accordingly,

The Apostle asserts, - " That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes , which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life; for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear-witness , and shew unto you that eternal Life," (for so he calls the Son of God,) " which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

And, That He was not only with God before he assum'd human Nature, but also really was God, St. Paul tells us, - " Let this Mind , (saith he,) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the Form of God , did not arrogate to himself to be equal with God;" (i.e) he made no Ostentation of his Divinity , which was hid under a Vail of human Flesh and Infirmity ; " but he emptied himself, and

"and took upon him the Form of a Servant, & was made in the Likeness of Men ; and being found in Fashion as a Man," or in the Habit of a Man, " he became obedient unto the Death." &c. (A)

So that if "his being made in the Likeness and Fashion of a Man," does signify that he was really Man by his Incarnation ; then surely, "his being in the Form of God, when he took upon him the Fashion and Likeness of Man," must in all Reason signify, that he really was God BEFORE he became Man : for which Reason the same Apostle did not hesitate to affirm, that "God was manifested in the Flesh." (B) From

(A) As the Scope and Design of this Place is to recommend Humanity and Condescension, it would be but a very low Instance of it, for a Person that is not God, not to assume to be equal with God ; tho' it is certainly a very great one, for a Person that is God, to condescend to become Man.

There is a Place in Irenæus, which will both illustrate this Passage of Scripture, and confirm the Truth of our Saviour's Divinity. The Words are these. — " Wherefore, our Lord, in the last Days, summing up all things in himself, came unto us, not as he could have done, but as we were able to see him : For, He could have come unto us in his incorruptible Glory, but we should not have been able to bear the Greatness of his Glory."

This incorruptible Glory, ascribed by Irenæus to our Saviour, is what Justin Martyr calls " An un-speakable Glory & Form, which cannot agree to corruptible things."

(B) The Socinians, in Order to avoid the Force of these Texts, which they cannot deny, affirm respecting them, that our Saviour, Serm. LX. some

From all these Testimonies, it is, and in Confor-
mity

some Time before his Entrance upon his publick Ministry, (they can-
not agree precisely when,) was taken-up into Heaven, and *then* and
there, had the Will of God revealed to him, and was sent-down from
Heaven again to make it known to the World. Now,

This is so very arbitrary and precarious a Supposition, as scarce
deserves an Answer; For, is it to be supposed, that, in all the vari-
ous Prophecies respecting our Lord, calling him *Immanuel*, "God
with us;" & reaching to all things relating to him: and in so exact an
History of our Saviour's Life, written by several Persons, the Relation
of so important a Matter as This, and of the Circumstances of it,
should be wholly omitted? That we should have a particular Account
of his being carried into Egypt in his Infancy, and of the Time when
he was brought-back from thence: - Of his disputing in the Temple
with the Jewish Doctors, and putting them to Silence when he was
but twelve Years of Age: - A punctual Relation of his being baptized
by John; and after that, "was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness
to be tempted of the Devil," and was carried by that Evil-Spirit from
one Place to another: But not one Word, either in the Prophets, E-
vangelists or Apostles, of his being taken-up, by God into Heaven,
and of his coming-down again from thence. Not the least Intimation
given either of the Time or any other Circumstance of the Thing, up-
on which, according to the Socinians, the Authority of his Mission,
and the Divinity of his Doctrine did so much depend: when many
things of so much less Moment are so minutely and exactly reported,
what can be the Reason of this deep Silence in all the Evangelists con-
cerning this Matter; But above all, it is to be wondered that St.
John, who wrote his Gospel last, and, (as Eusebius tells us,) on Pur-
pose to supply the Omissions of the other Evangelists, should give no
Account of this Matter; and yet, as the Socinians suppose, should so
often take it for granted, & refer to it; as when it is said that *He came*
forth from God, and was *sent from God*, and *came down from Heaven*,
with several such-like Expressions. Who can believe this? Besides,
According

sity to them, that our Church uses Christ, in her Form of Faith, the Nicene Creed, & the God of God, very

According to this Device, the Son of God did not *first* come from Heaven into the World, as the Scripture every where seems to say ; but was *first* in the World, and *then* went to Heaven, and from thence came back into the World again. — He was not in the Beginning with God, but was *first* in the World, and afterwards with God : Whereas, St. John lays, that "The Word was in the Beginning, and *then* was made Flesh, and dwelt among us :" Whereas, They say, that He *first* was made Flesh, and *then*, a great while after, was in the Beginning with God. A Supposition quite contrary to all the Texts before cited.

As to some other Texts, which speak of his Existence before his Incarnation ; as , that he was glorified with the Father before the World was ; and , Before Abraham was, I am : these they interpret thus; That "He was glorified with his Father before the World was" ; and ; that "He was before Abraham was," [sic] in the divine Fore-knowledge and Decree : But then surely they do not consider that this is nothing but what might have been said of any other Man , and even of Abraham himself , that *before he was*, (i.e) before he had a real and actual Existence , he was in the Purpose and Decree of God, (i.e) before he was , God did intend he should be ; which is a Sense so very flat, that we can hardly abstain from saying it is ridiculous. for certainly our Saviour did intend, by saying this of himself, to give himself some Preference and Advantage above Abraham , which this Sense and Interpretation does not in the least do : because of any other Man , as well as of our Blessed Saviour it may as truly be said , that he was in the Fore-knowledge and Decree of God before Abraham was born.

Besides , It is to be observed further , that our Saviour does not say, before Abraham was, I *was* ; but , " before Abraham was, I *am* :" which is the proper Name of God, whereby is signified the eternal Duration and Permanency of his Being : in which Sense he is said by the

Sermon. LX.

Apostle

"very God of very God," and that, "because He was in the Father, and the Father in Him." To these

וְיַעֲשֵׂה

Apostle, to be the Same Yesterday, to Day, and forever. And so like-
wife in the Rev. I am A, and O; the Beginning and the Ending, saith the
Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the ALMIGHTY.
And, that this is spoken of the Son, we may see in the same Chap-
ter, where he saith of himself, I am the First and the Last: and so like-
wife he describes himself again, I am A, and O; the Beginning and the
End, the First and the Last: and, that we may not doubt who it is that
thus describes his own Eternity, He, continuing still to speak in the
same Person, says, I Jesus have sent mine Angel, &c.

After this, I shall only observe, that all their Expressions are the common Descriptions which the Scripture gives of the Eternity of God, & that Being is commensurate to all the several Respects of Duration, past, present, and future : - Besides, the Attribute, **ALMIGHTY**, (a Part also of this Description,) is so peculiar a Property of God, (it) of Him, who is God by Nature, that the Scripture never gives it to any other.

Don modo ita loqui? non tali, quidam horribilis ad eum si illi, asperbi
"Iustitia tua, non crudelitas tua", sed; non Iustitia crudelitas
non Iustitia sed crudelitas deo, propter quod regnare debet etiam
in aliis mundis. At si quidem dicitur mihi: quid est illa iustitia et
crudelitas?

As the Generation of Jesus Christ from God is
SERMON
 Preached with great Satisfaction to the People in the
 Sufficiency of the Divine Nature; to it was no object
 Met to be explained, but that a Person of so high
 Degree, upon Examination, & Consideration
 in every Respect justified the
 said Exposition; and accordingly he
 did Exposit from his Life and Doctrine,
 as of the Only-begotten of the Father.

John i. 14. "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." The many high Expressions given us in this Chapter, leave us in no Manner of Room to doubt of whom they are spoken, that "He was in the Beginning with God, and that He was God; — that all things were made by him, and that without Him was not any thing made, that was made; — that He was the Life and Light of Men;" these are of no light Import, and can only be applied to that "Word;" the Son of God himself, "which was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth."

As the Generation of Jesus Christ from God the Father, made him Partaker with the Father, in the Substance of the Divine Nature; so it was no other-

wise to be expected, but that a Person of so high Descent, should in all things exhibit a Character in every Respect suitable to it: and accordingly he did exhibit it, for "we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth."

At his Incarnation, we find him announced to the blessed Virgin his Mother, to be the Son of God, for, upon her doubting how these things should be, the Angel said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon

thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Accordingly, at his Birth, we find an Angel, with a Company of the heavenly Host, proclaiming him to be "Christ, the Lord."

These Preludes respecting our Saviour naturally raised very high Expectations of some extraordinary future Eminence in him: "accordingly, in perfect Innocence, with all Goodness, and in every Virtue, whether of Freedom from Sin, of fervent Piety and Devotion towards God, or Good-will and Beneficence

and the Mirableness in all things, exhibited the Evidences and Substances of God's Rightful Expectations from him; he mightly and wisely, (wher that Name emphatically imports,) "had reserved," (i.e.) "the Glory which was to forty swi beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." St. John saith, "He cometh in his Glory, and all the angels with him; for he receiveth power over all nations, and the whole earth shall be filled with his Glory."

Having already (from a similar Text) proved the Divinity of Christ, both from his Generation from the Father, and from the Divine Worship, (peculiarly belonging to the Divine Being,) there required to be paid to Him, and also confirmed it, from the Testimonies of the ancient Christian Fathers in the Case, and from the divine Properties given to Christ in the Scriptures, with the Testimonies therein expressed concerning him; I shall now further confirm this Doctrine from the Character of Christ himself, as delineated in the Gospel, incontestibly proving him to be the Son of God; For though "he was made Flesh and dwelt among us, yet we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth."

That "the Word was made Flesh," (i.e.) of the Manhood of Christ, I presume, I may here safely wave insisting on the Proof of it, for this he that is

both

both God and Man, was as early denied to be Man as God; yet the now most prevailing Heresy, and from which at present the true Faith is in most Danger, is so far from taking from him the true Nature of Man, that it will allow him to have truly no other. I shall therefore observe concerning the both, that tho' we had none of those many plain and positive doctrinal Assertions in holy Scripture, of the two distinct Natures of our blessed Lord, yet the bare History of his Actions upon Earth, a simple Narrative only of his Life, his Miracles, his Death and Resurrection, would be sufficient to prove him, what we, with the whole catholic Church, believe him to be, both God and Man. And this is the Proof which our Church makes use of in that plain but excellent Homily on the Incarnation, as fitted for the Capacity of the weakest, as the Conviction of the wisest.

In that he did hunger and thirst, eat and drink, sleep and wake, in that he wept and sorrowed over Jerusalem, in that he suffered the most grievous Pains both of Body and Soul, and finally Death itself: what can be more apparent than that he was perfect Man as we are? - But in that he forgave Sins, cast out Devils, knew the Thoughts of Men's Hearts, walked upon the Waves, & had the Winds

and

proved from his Life and Doctrine. 295

and the Second his Command; And lastly and finally, in that he himself removed his Life, and suffered his ipsa Humanum: what last he made evident that that he was perfect Good also y had equal to the Father; i.e. touching his Divinity in all things; we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth; and not If must be acknowledged, that the Miracles recorded, and the Prophecies accomplished in the History of Christ, are the two great Pillars on which our Faith in him must principally rest. But as these Arguments have been already insisted on in this Case, tho' capable, perhaps, of being only perfectly understood by refined Minds, I shall here, therefore, (as more level to the meanest Capacities,) enlarge a little on that other Kind of Evidence here mentioned, [viz] the Character and Conduct of our divine Master: for by seeing the Virtues which Jesus displayed thro' Life, we may reasonably expect, that it will at once confirm the Faith of those who believe, and also produce Conviction in those who do not. — And first, — *Were we only to say of our Saviour what even Pilate said of him, that we can find no Fault in him, & that the whole Temper of his Soul, and the whole Tenor of his Life, were absolutely harmless through-*

throughout; that, from the first Moment of His Birth to his last Agony on the Cross, he never once fell into the smallest Error of Conduct; never once spake unadvisedly with his Lips; were we to confine ourselves solely to this negative Kind of Excellence, it is more than can be said of any other Person that ever came into the World! — But,

Great and uncommon as even this Sort of Perfection is, it forms but a very small Part of that which belonged to Jesus. — He was not only exempt from every the slightest Failing, but he possessed and practised every imaginable Virtue that was consistent with his Situation; and that too in the highest Degree of Excellence to which Virtue is capable of being exalted.

That Idea of complete Goodness which the ancient Philosophers took so much fruitless Pains to describe, and which they justly thought would so strongly attract the Affections of Men, if it could be made visible, was, in the Person of the Holy Jesus, and in him only since the World began, presented to the Eyes of Mankind. His ardent Love for God, his Zeal for the Service, his Resignation to the Will, his unrevered Obedience to the Commands of his heavenly Father, the Compassion, the Kindness, the Solitude, the Tenderness he showed for

the world.

VI. 1. V

the

the whitest Hugh-an-Roy, even for the gift of Simeon
and his birth-right of his Enemies yoke past of Conquer
and he had overthrown his own Flattery the confounding
Prud'ence with which he studied all the Errors that
overthrew See him a sober Wisdome, the Justice, & the
elicacy of his Replies ; the Purity and Gentleness of
his Manners, the Sweetness yet Dignity of his De-
portment, the Mildness with which he reprimed
the Mistakes, the Prejudices, and the Failings of his
Disciples ; the Temper he preserved under the sever-
est Provocations from his Enemies ; the Patience
the Good-nature, the Meekness, with which he endur'd
the impudent insults, and the grossest Indigne-
tities ; the Fortitude he displayed under the most
painful and ignominious Death that human Inge-
nity could devise on human Malignity inflict ; and
that divinely charitable Prayer which he put-up for
his Murderers in the very midst of his Agony ;
No Father, forgive them, for they know not what
they do ; with these ; and a Multitude of other pec-
uliar Excellencies in his Character, (which it is
impossible here so enumerate,) I concur to render
him, beyond Comparison, the greatest, the wisest,
and the best of Men. It is also from ylgoymont
I Confide more particularly as a public Teacher
that an Understanding must have been, by
whence

when he enlightened; from which so sublime and perfect a System of Piety and Morals as that of the Gospel proceeded, exceeding not only all the Discourses of Men, & the most perfect Systems of Pagan Morality, but all the Revelations of God, made before him: — But further still, ~~as before said to you~~
 How astonishing, and from what Source inspired, must the Mind of THAT Man be, who could enter, even so vast a Thought in so low a Condition, as that of instructing and reforming a whole World; a World divided between Atheism and Superstition; but universally abandoned to Sin; of teaching the whole Race of Mankind to live soberly, righteously, and godly here, and leading them on to an Eternity of Happiness hereafter? How contemptible a Figure do they, who affected to be the Conquerors of the World, make, when compared with him who undertook to be the Saviour of it? Then, in the Execution of this immense Design, what Condescension without Meanness, what Majesty without Pride, what Firmness without Obstinacy, what Zeal without Bitterness or Enthusiasm, what Piety without Superstition; how wonderful a Combination of seemingly most opposite, if any could be opposite, Virtues; how exact a Temperature of every thing great, and venerable, & lovely, in his Soul! — And,
conclw.

Another

proved by his Life and Doctrine. 373

In formerudy composed and remarkable Occasions; thus all those admirable Qualities appear'd perfectly early and natural to him; and seemed to require the least Exertion of his Mind to produce or to support them. And the Case was the same in his Discourses and his Instructions. No Emotion when he delivered the most sublime and affecting Doctrines, the most comfortable or most terrifying Predictions. The Prophecy before him satisfied and took under the Communications which they received from above. But Truths that overwhelmed the Servants of God, were familiar to his Son. Composed on the greatest Occasions, respectable even on the least; he was at all Times the same; and the uniform Dignity & Propriety of his Behaviour throughout, evidently flowed from the inbred Grandeur & Rectitude of his Mind. Tried he was every Way, (and that in so public a Life perpetually,) by wicked Men, by the Wicked-One, by Friends as well as by Enemies; but far from being overcome, never once disconcerted, never once embarrassed, but calmly superior to every Artifice, to every Temptation, to every Difficulty.

Well then, may we ask, even after this very short and very imperfect Sketch of our Saviour's Character, "Whence has this Man these things, and what

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Wisdom

Wisdom is this, that is given unto him?" He had evidently none of the usual Means or Opportunities of cultivating his Understanding, or improving his Heart. He was born in a low and indigent Condition, without Education, without Learning, without any Models to form himself upon, either in his own Time and his own Country, or in any Records of former Ages that were at all likely to fall into his Hands. Yet, notwithstanding this, he manifested and supported invariably thro' Life, such Wisdom and such Virtue as were never before found united, and, we may venture to say, never will be again united in any human Being.

The Consequence then is unavoidable, and One of these two things must be true: — Either the Character of our Lord, as drawn in the Gospels, must be fictitious; or else the Person to whom it really belonged, must be endued with Powers more than human: for never did mere Mortal Man speak or act as Jesus did.

If we take the former Part of the Alternative, & affirm, that the Portrait of our Saviour, as drawn in the Gospels, is an ideal one: where, in the first Place, shall we find the Man that could draw it? that by the mere Force of Imagination, could invent

most glorious ones he absolutely perfect, and
most original; The Circumstances of his uniting
the human and divine Nature in one Person, and
of his being as one and the same. Thus the Messiah
of the Jews, and the Instructor, the Redeemer and
Mediator, and the Judge of Mankind, are so very
peculiar, and so perfectly new, and yet all these se-
veral Parts are so well supposed, and preserved so
distinct, and every thing our Saviour said or did so
admirably accommodated so each, that to form
such a Character as this, without any Original to copy
it from, exceeds the utmost Stretch of human Im-
agination. But, who drew new York a bill? No!

If we can think it possible that any one Person at
least might be found, who, with the Help of ex-
traordinary Talents, and a better Education than
any other Person ever had, might do so much more
than any of the rest, ever did, what Colour can there
be for applying this to the Evangelists, to those
who have been so often and so opprobriously called
the Publicans, the Tenchakers, and the Fishermen
of Galilee? They had never studied at Athens or at
Rome. They had no superior Talents, no Learn-
ing, no Education, no Skill in designing or colour-
ing ideal Characters. It is not most assuredly, it is
not Men such as these that Jesus born Nay, or else

Further still, had they been ever so capable of forming such a Character as that of our Saviour, what Reason in the World is there to imagine that they would have ascribed it to the Messiah? They expected him to be of a Spirit and a Behaviour widely different from that of the meek, and humble, and passive Jesus. They expected an enterprising and prosperous Warrio[r], avenging the injurious Sufferings of his Countrymen; trampling the Nations under his Feet, and establishing the Jewish Empire, and with it the Jewish Law, throughout the World. (♦)

Possessed as they were with these Notions, instead of drawing for their promised Deliverer such a Portrait as the Gospel presents to us, had they seen it ready drawn, and been asked whose it was, he would have been the last Person upon Earth for whom they would have conceived it intended. — Besides, what conceivable Inducement could the sacred Historians have to impose an imaginary Personage upon the World? and why, above all, should they persevere in this Imposition, when they saw and felt that Hatred, and Persecution, and Death, were the certain Consequences of their maintaining the Reality of a Character, which they knew all the while to be a mere Phantom of their own Invention.

(♦) See Acts i. 6.

and

and could have satisfied themselves by confessing it? But it can if, is not impossible that Human Creatures might contrary to all Honesty, and all Interest, be shrewdly and causally bent upon deceiving, we have full Evidence as can be, that the Evangelists were not so. There is manifestly an air of Simplicity and godly Sincerity, of plain unornamented Truth in everything they relate; nothing wrought up with Art, nothing studiously placed in the fairest Angle to attract the Eye, no Solicitude to dwell even on the most illustrious Parts of our Saviour's Character, but, on the contrary, so dry and cold a Manner of telling the most striking Facts, and most affecting Truths, as furnishes Ground to apprehend that they themselves did not always distinctly perceive the divine Wisdom and Excellence of many things said and done by Jesus, and recorded in their Books. At least, they have by no Means brought them forward into View as they well deserved, and as Men who wrote with a Design, would most certainly have done by way of adjunct glazed and dressing glass. This very Circumstance, added to the whole Tenor and Tenor of their Writings, makes it clearly prov'd, that they followed with religious Care, and delivered with scrupulous Fidelity, Truth and Fact, what appeared to them, and nothing else. Besides,

The publick Manner in which our Saviour is recorded to have wrought his Miracles, and the Silence, or rather the Confession (*) of his Enemies concerning them, these are real Testimonies of the Truth before us;

When our Saviour began to publish the Gospel of his Kingdom, he did not, (as Deceivers usually do,) vent his new Doctrines, or pretend to perform his Wonders, (the Evidence of his divine Mission,) in Places where there was no Person fit to oppose the one, or disprove the other.

Throughout the whole Course of his Ministry he addressed himself constantly to Multitudes, both in the Temple, and in the Synagogues; where his Life, and Doctrine, and Miracles might, by his professed Enemies, be narrowly observed and examined. And, if at any Time he withdrew into the Desert, and did Wonders there, it was not in Order to avoid the Eyes of Men; but that he might have Opportunity, by that Means, to manifest his divine Power, and preach his heavenly Truths to yet greater Numbers. Accordingly we find with him, in the Wilderness, THREE THOUSAND Witnesses of a Miraculous Creation by well known Prophets.

(*) Compare Matt. iv. 24; ix. 36; xiv. 2. Mark i. 48. Luke iv. 14, 15; v. 15, 16. John ii. 22, 23; vi. 2, vii. 31, xi. 47, &c. with John iii. 2; xii. 19, &c.

racle, at one Time, and even two thousand &c
another; and therefore, when the High-Priest
questioned him concerning this Disciple and his
Doctrines, he made this Reply. I spake openly to
the World; I even taught in the Synagogue, and in
the Temple, whether the Jews always resort; and
in secret have I said nothing; why askest thou me?
Ask them which heard me; what I have said unto
them; behold, they know what I said.

The Beginning of his Miracles was before much
Company - and the last he wrought was in the
Midst of Jerusalem, where the whole Nation of the
Jews were then assembled to celebrate the Passovers.
And, whenever he manifested his divine Mission, by
the chief Seal and Evidence of it, his rising any one
from THE DEAD, he took care, at that Time espe-
cially, to be surrounded with Numbers.

He pitched upon such Persons for the Subjects of
his miraculous Cures, whose InfirmitieS and DiseaseS
were known, and of long standing - One who had
been "blind from his very Birth;" - Another diseas-
ed with an Issue of Blood, "twelve years," - and a,
in the Third afflicted with a Palsy "for thirty and eigh-
t Years;" so that there could be no possible Confede-
racy in a Case, where the Person cured was known
to have laboured under that Distemper some Years
Vol. iv. before

before our Saviour was born. — And, as he did so, he said, As he lived, so he died. — and at his Burial, we find a publick Guard set upon his Grave; and he arose from thence in the Presence of that very Guard; and, to their Astonishment. — He appeared afterwards to "FIVE HUNDRED" at once; and to the TWELVE Disciples frequently; ate, drank, and conversed with them for forty Days, and was at last taken up into Heaven in their Sight, by a slow and pleasurable Assent.

Thus stands the Gospel Account of the Life, and Death, and Resurrection of our Lord; and the entire Silence of the Jews upon this Occasion, in not denying any of these things, when they had all the Advantages both of Time and Place, that Men could desire, of disproving these Frauds, (if any such had been,) and who were in the strongest Manner interested & concerned to make-use of them, is a strong Proof of their real Existence; endeavouring only, weakly enough, to invalidate their Force, by ascribing them to evil Demons, Art-Magic, or to any thing but to the true Fountain of Power from whence they flowed.

This is a Testimony of great Weight with us, who are conscious of the Inadequacy of these Cau-

of his simple Birth & Poverty, therefore, can never doubt by what Power Christ performed his Miracles and which, therefore, as he did them in, his own Name, leave us in no Room, to doubt, of the Divine Power which he possessed.

It is evident, therefore, upon the Whole, that our Blessed Lord was in Reality the very Person that he is represented to be in the Gospel. And as he is represented to have possessed a Degree of Perfection, both intellectual and moral, far beyond what Human Nature is capable of arriving at, and that too, without any of the common Means of acquiring such Perfection, the Conclusion can be no other than this, that both Christ and his Religion came from God, which none was more likely to know, or to report more truly to Mankind, than he who came from the Bosom of his Father. — But,

It may still perhaps be said, that there is no Necessity for supposing any thing supernatural in the Case. He was only One of those wonderful and extraordinary Characters that sometimes appear even in the very lowest Stations; & by the Force of great natural Talents, a natural Dignity of Mind, & constitutional Goodness of Disposition, break out from

the Obscurity of their Situation, and rise superior to all the rest of Mankind. — But,

Besides what has been already insisted on, that no such Character as that of Christ is to be found in any Nation of the World, in any Period of Time, or any Situation of Life, it must be remembered, that our Lord himself laid-claim to something more than the Character of a great and a good Man. He laid-claim to a divine Original. He affirmed that he was the Son of God, and that "He and his Father were One." — If therefore this was not the Case, he must have been either an Enthusiast, or an Impostor, (i.e.) either a very weak, or a very wicked Man. But either of these Suppositions is utterly irreconcileable with the Description that has just been given of him, of Wisdom and Goodness, which he has been proved, and is allowed to have possessed, in their utmost Extent.

Whoever, then, acknowledges him to be a great, a wise, and a perfectly good Man, must also, (on his own Principles,) allow him that Divinity which he claimed.

Here, then, is a Proof of the divine Authority of our Lawgiver, and our Religion, which every one

may

any comprehend; and which it will not be easy for any One to withstand. Some alledge that they want Leisure, and others, that they want Learning or Ability, to investigate, with sufficient Care and Accuracy, the prophetic, the miraculous, and the historical Evidences of our Faith. This, indeed, is commonly nothing more than mere Pretexte. But even this Pretexte is taken away by the Argument here offered to their Consideration. It is involved in no Difficulty, and requires no laborious or critical Examination, no uncommon Degree of Sagacity or Ability to decide upon. Nothing more is requisite than to lay open the Bible and to contemplate the Character of our Lord, as it is there drawn with the most perfect Fairness and Honesty by the Evangelists. Whoever can judge of any thing, can judge of this; and we know by Experience that it is calculated to carry Conviction even into the most unwilling Minds.

It is not, then, the Prejudice, (as it has been called,) of a Christian Education, &c. it is, no; the mere Dose of Superstition, or the mere Enthusiasm of pious Affection and Gratitude towards our Redeemer, which make us discover in his Character plain

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and evident Marks of the Son of God. They have been discovered, and acknowledged by Men who were troubled with no such religious infirmitie; by one Man who was a professed Pagan; and by another Man who, (without professing it, and perhaps without knowing it,) was, in Fact, little better than a Pagan. — On the Strength of these Testimonies, then, added to the Proofs which have been here adduced, we may safely assume it as a Principle, that “Jesus is the Son of God.”

Having thus, by the Reason of the thing itself, and from the Authority of the first Christian Fathers, and from Holy Scripture, and from the Life and Doctrine of Christ himself, established the Divinity of Christ, it will be less difficult to answer the Objections alleged against it. Or indeed, if we could not answer them, (as the Matter is so high, & above our Comprehension,) they will have the less Weight with us, as we see it already well-founded: - especially, as they only say that the Matter is not impossible; it is yet UNINTELLIGIBLE, INCONGRUOUS, and UNSUITABLE, and contrary to many plain Expressions of Scripture concerning Christ, which cannot, by any Means, be understood of a Divine Being.

We diff'rently think ; That there is no Impossibility in the things (as the Divine taking the Human Nature upon him.) This seems to be very evident from the difference whereby we have already insisted with it ; [viz.] of the Union between the Soul and Body of Man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is ; as yet so Man can expand, either to himself, or to others, the Material How it is, nor can it be conceived by us. But yet we are as certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so ; And is it not as possible for God, if He so please to Unite himself to Human Nature, as it is for the Soul to be unites to the Body ?

As to its Being above Reason, (which the Objectors are loath to admit any thing to be,) This will beat no great Dispute, because all that can hereby be meant, is, that our Reason is not able fully to comprehend it. But, What then ? Are there no Mysteries in Religion ; This no Man will say ; before God, whose infinite Nature & Perfections are the very Foundation of Religion, is certainly the greatest Mystery of all others, and the most incomprehensible : But, we must not, they will not for us Reason deny, that there is such a Being as God. And therefore, if there be any Mysteries in Religion, there is no reasonable Objection against them, that we

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do not fully comprehend them ; because all Mysteries, in what Kind soever, whether in Religion or in Nature, so far as they are Mysteries, are, for that very Reason, incomprehensible.— To assure us that a Thing really is, it is not necessary for us to know the Manner how it is, or can be ; but only, that it is not impossible, and that we are assured that it is.

As to the present Case ; Jesus Christ being proved to be the Son of God, the necessary Consequence is, that every thing he taught comes to us with the Weight and Sanction of divine Authority, and demands from every sincere Disciple of Christ implicit Belief, and implicit Obedience.

We must not, after this, pretend, (as is now too much the prevailing Mode,) to select just what we happen to like in the Gospel, and lay aside all the rest ; to admit, (for Instance,) the moral and preceptive Part, and reject all those sublime Doctrines which are peculiar to the Gospel, and which form the Wall of Partition between Christianity, and what is called Natural Religion.

This is assuming a Liberty, and creating a Distinction, which no Believer in the divine Authority of our Lord, can on any Ground justify. Christ delivered all his Doctrines in the Name of God. He required that all of them, without Exception, should be

permitted. He has given to Man a licence to hope just so much, or as little of them as he thinks fit. He has authorized no human Being to add to it, or to diminish from it. *et totidem sunt et illi.* Let us, then, never presume thus to new-model the Gospel, according to our own particular humour or Caprice, but be content to take it as God has thought fit to leave it. Let us admit, as it is our bounden Duty, on the sole Ground of his Authority, those mysterious Truths which are far beyond the Reach of any finite Understanding, but which it was natural and reasonable to expect, in a Revelation pertaining to that incomprehensible Being, "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity." "Let us not exercise ourselves in great Matters which are too high for us, but restrain our Souls and keep them low." Laying aside all the Superstition & all the Pride of human Wisdom, "let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith," without wavering, without refining, without philosophising. Let us put ourselves, without Delay, without Reserve, into the Hands of our heavenly Guide, and submit our Judgments, with boundless Confidence, to his Direction, who "is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Since we know in whom we believe; should once it hath been thus variously proved that he is

the Son of God ; let us never forget that this gives him a Right , a divine Right , to the Obedience of our Understandings , as well as the Obedience of our Wills . Let us, therefore , resolutely beat down every bold Imagination , “ every high thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God ; bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ , receiving with Meekness the ingrafted Word , that is able to save our Souls.”

As to the Objection , that it is incongruous and beneath the Dignity of the Son of God to be united to the Human Nature ; We answer , that herein we measure God too much by Ourselves ; and because We , “ who are evil ,” have seldom so much Goodness as to stoop beneath ourselves for the Benefit & Good of others , we are apt to think that God bath not more Goodness neither ; and , that it doth not become him . — But , as “ God is good , so he doeth Good , & his tender Mercies are over all his Works .” To imitate which , is the greatest Glory of Man . (*)

(*) What Pliny said to the Emperor Trajan concerning earthly Kings , is much more true of the Lord of Glory , the great King of Heaven & Earth , [viz] “ He that is at the Top , and can rise no higher , yet hath this one Way left to become greater , by stooping beneath himself ;” which he may very safely do , “ being secure of his own Greatnes .” The lower any Being , be he ever so high , condescends to do Good , the Glory of his Goodnes shines so much the brighter .

So that, in Truth and according to Right Reason, it was no real Disputation or Disparagement to the Son of God to become Man for the Salvation of Mankind; but, on the contrary, it was a most glorious Humility, and the greatest Instance of the truest Goodness that ever was. And therefore, The Apostle to the Hebrews, when he says, that "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest," but was "appointed of God to this Office, as was Aaron," seems to intimate, that it was a Glory to "the Son of God to be an High Priest for the Sons of Men;" For, tho' it was an amazing Contendence; yet was it likewise, a most wondrous Argument of his Goodness, which is the highest Glory of the Divine Nature. In a Word,

If God, for our Sakes, did submit to a Condition which we may think did let's become Him, let us not add to it, by lessening him for it; it being rather Cause and Matter of Thankfulness, than of Cavil and Exception. We have Reason to acknowledge and admire his Goodness, but none at all to upbraid him for his Kindness. Indeed,

After all that we can say, we must allow that God himself is a better, nay the best and only competent Judge, what is fit for him to do; & that He needs not the Council of any; as to what best becomes

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comes

comes him in this, or any other Case: "Behold; in this thou art not just; - God is greater than Man; why dost thou dispute against him? For He giveth no Account of his Matters to any." *Jud. viii. 11.*

As to the Last Objection; that it is contrary to many plain Expressions of Scripture concerning Christ, which cannot, by any Means, be understood of a Divine Being; We answer, That as in the Person of Christ, the Human Nature was entire, and acted according to its own Character; so there was such an Union & Inhabitation of the Eternal Word in it, that there arose out of That, a Communion of Names and Characters as we find in the Scriptures.

A Man is called, TALL, FAIR, & HEALTHY, from the State of his Body; and LEARNED, WISE & GOOD, from the Qualities of his Mind: - So Christ is called "Holy, Harmless and Undefiled," - is said to have been born, suffered, died, risen, and ascended up into Heaven, with Relation to his Human Nature: so is he also said to be in "the Form of God," - "to have created all Things," - "to be the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person," with Relation to his Divine Nature.

The Ideas that we have of what is Material, and what is Spiritual, leads us to distinguish in a Man those Descriptions that belong to his Body from

those that belong to his Mind ; so the different Apprehensions that we have of what is CREATED & UN-CREATED, must be our Guide to direct us into the Resolution of those various Expressions that occur in the Scriptures concerning Christ.

Let us now see whether the Opinion of our Adversaries hath not greater Difficulties in, and more palpable Absurdities following from it.

They say, that the Son of God is a mere Creature, not God by Nature, but yet truly and really God by Office, and by divine Appointment and Constitution ; to whom the very same Honour & Worship is to be given, which we give to Him who is God by Nature. But,

Is there no Difficulty, nor Absurdity in this ; in bringing Idolatry into the Christian Religion ? One main Design of which was to banish such Practice out of the World. And, will they contend, in read and good earnest, that the giving Divine Worship to a mere Creature, (as they will have it,) is not Idolatry ? - What ! No Absurdity in a God, as it were, but of Yesterday ? - in a created God ? - in a God merely by positive Institution ! - and this, in Opposition to a plain moral Precept of eternal Obligation, and to the fixed and immutable Nature

Serm. LX.

and

and Reason of Things?

"So that, to avoid the Shadow and Appearance of a Plurality of Deities, they really run into it, by admitting of Two Gods, the one by Nature, and the other by Office.

The Difficulty hereby is really inextricable, and the Absurdity manifest. God hath declared himself "jealous of his Honour," and that "He will not give his Glory to another." And the Apostle hath described Idolatry to be, the giving Service or Worship to things "which by Nature are no Gods."

I shall only make this short Reflection from the Whole, [viz] that we ought to treat the holy Scriptures as the Oracles of God, with all Reverence & Submission of Mind to Doctrines therein revealed: and to interpret them with that Candour and Simplicity, which is due to the sincere Declarations of God, intended for the Instruction, and not for the Deception and Delusion of Men: and more especially, in the particular Explication of the Doctrine before us, that it is not safe for our shallow Understandings to wade further than the Scripture goes before us, lest we go out of our Depth, and lose ourselves in the profound Inquiry into the deep Things of God, which He hath not thought fit in this

this present State of Darkness and Imperfection; to reveal more plainly and fully to us. (A)

It ought to be thought sufficient, that the Scripture, speaking of the same Person; Jesus Christ our Blessed Saviour, doth frequently and expressly call him God and Man; which, how it can so easily be conceived upon any other Supposition, than that of the Union of the Divine and Human Natures in One Person, is not to be comprehended.

To Conclude, Some affect to treat this Doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, as an indifferent Matter, and conceive it as a Truth merely Speculative.

But,

(A) There is great Difficulty & Danger in the Explication of nice Points and Doctrines of Religion; in which the further we go, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal to us in Scripture concerning it, the more we are entangled; and that which some Men are pleased to all explaining of it, does, but too often, render it more obscure.

Non amo nimis argutam Theologiam.

Those Doctrines of Religion, and Interpretations of Scripture are ever the most to be suspected, which need Abundance of Wit, and a great many Criticisms to make them out.

An ancient wise Father, (Irenaeus,) who kept close to what was revealed, "blamed those who pretended to know the inestimable Mystery of God, or were too curious in inquiring after what Manner the Word was derived from the Father, which, (as they,) no Man knoweth." "Who hath declared his Generation?" — *No man in R^enow Mid Tyndale Non sacerdote.* — See Knob's Essays, No. 44. On the ill-effect of proving by Argument, Fruile misually admitted.

Secundum Eusebium. — Vnde dicitur quod non possunt.

But to Consider ^{it} is an indifferent Matter who is our God, and what the Object of our Worship ^(A) — The Dignity of the Person who accomplished our Salvation, ought certainly to influence our Practice; and excite us to Obedience, Reverence ^(A), and Submission, ^{to wod d'Idw ; wAM bns coD mid tis} The Scriptures strongly insist on this Argument, as mightily enhancing the Greatness of our Salvation, carrying with it the strongest Obligation to Duty: " If the Word, spoken by Angels, was steadfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward; How shall We escape, if we neglect so great Salvation," which was confirmed to us by the Son of God?

Let us, therefore, who believe on the Name of the Son of God, & acknowledge his Divinity, show forth in our Lives and Conversations, the proper

" It is surely needless, among Christians, to endeavor Fruits
take the Defence of the Divinity of Christ; or to go about industriously to prove, that without it, their whole
Solenity & Worship is but committing the most gross Idolatry. For if Christ be not God, our whole Religion where it is
is no better. Rowly Reve-
rence shall be done by all Persons present, as it hath been accustom'd, testifying by these outward Ceremonies and Gestures, their inward Humility, Christian Resolution, and due Acknowledgment,
that the L ORD JESUS CHRIST, the true eternal Son of God, is
the only Saviour of the World, in whom all the Mercies, Gra-
ces, and Promises of God to Mankind, for this Life and the Life to
come, are fully and wholly comprised." — See Philip. 2, 5 - 11.

Fruits of such a Faith , by living to his Glory in all dutiful Obedience , and joyful Acknowledgements of his Favours unto us , " Who is over all ; God , "Blessed forever." (A)

(A) See further Matters respecting our Blessed Saviour , in the Discourses for Christmas-Day , Good-Friday , Easter-Day & Ascension .

But you cannot tell how indifferent Matter is who is our God, and what the Object of our Worship is. The Dignity of the Person who accomplished our Salvation, doth certainly influence our Practice; and exhort us to Obedience, Reverence (A), and Submission, as we do in all other cases of this kind. The Scriptures strongly insist on this Argument, as mightily enhancing the Greatness of our Salvation, carrying with it the strongest Obligation to Duty: "If the Word, spoken by Angels, was steadfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward; How shall We escape, if we neglect so great Salvation," which was confirmed to us by the Son of God?

Let us, therefore, who believe on the Name of

the Son of God,

properly call CHRIST our God, and before keeping

any solemnity or solemn communion, let us take

proper Fruits

and see the 18th Canon of the Church to this Purpose, where it is

appointed, (among other things,) that "When in Time of Divine Service, the LORD JESUS shall be mentioned, due and lowly Reverence shall be done by all Persons present, as it hath been accustomed, testifying by these outward Ceremonies and Gestures, their inward Humility, Christian Resolution, and due Acknowledgment that the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the true eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour of the World, know him alone all the Mercies, Graces, and Promises of God to Mankind, for this Life and the Life to come, are fully and wholly comprised." — See Philip. 2, 5 - 11.

The Conclusion.

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Fruits of such a Faith, by living to his Glory in all dutiful Obedience, and joyful Acknowledgements of his Favours unto us, "Who is over all; God, "Blessed forever." (A)

(A) See further Matters respecting our Blessed Saviour, in the Discourses for Christmas-Day, Good-Friday, Easter-Day & Ascension.

It is in God's word, that a door is left open for us to salvation.

SERMON LXI.

John xiv. 26. "The Comforter, which is the

"Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my

"Name, He shall teach you all things."

Of the Holy Ghost.

We have, in these Words of our Blessed Saviour an incontestable Proof of the Sacred Trinity of Persons, in the Divine Godhead, separately & distinctly set forth to us, - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Of the Being and Attributes of God the Father, and of the moral Character, and divine Life of God the Son, we have already treated; The Subject therefore, in Order from the Words before us, induces us to treat of the real and personal Existence of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person in the Trinity; who, "proceeding from the Father and the Son," together with the Father and the Son, doth constitute the ONE God; and therefore, "together with the Father and the Son, is to be worshipped and glorified."

As

As to the proper Nature of this Divine Spirit, the Vanity and Pride of learned Men has often confounded their Understandings, while they have presumed to be "wise above what is written," intruding into things which they have not seen, and attempting to explain what God has not revealed. The Essence and inmost Nature of the smallest Body, we cannot fully understand : The Life of the meanest Animal, is beyond all our Philosophy to explain ; The Nature of the Soul of Man, is still a more unsearchable Mystery ; The Nature and essence of Angels, is yet far more unfathomable than any of These : How then should vain Man presume to search out the Nature of the Spirit of God ? the Nature of the Only-begotten Son of God ? the Nature of the Father himself, the incomprehensible God and Father of all things ? What the Scripture expressly declares to us, is all we can ever know concerning these Matters ; and This the meanest Christian is as capable of understanding, as the most learned Disputers in the World. Concerning the Nature of the Holy Spirit, therefore, That which the Scripture teaches us, is This only ; that He is a Divine Person, in an ineffable Manner deriving his Being, proceeding from, or being sent forth, from the Father ; whereby he is, and upon

Sermon LXXI. pars 10 & 11. 1679. folio. which

which Account he is stiled, (in a singular and peculiar Manner,) "The Spirit of God." And because, after the Ascension of Christ, the Gifts distributed by the same Spirit, were, (according to the Promise of the Father,) poured-forth in much greater Plenty and Abundance than before; therefore he is frequently stiled likewise, The Spirit of Christ: and in general, in either, or both Senses, the HOLY GHOST.

The Term GHOST, is the same with Spirit, or Spiritual Essence, distinct from Corporeity; - and the Epithet HOLY is added because he is most Holy in himself, and also in Respect of his Office, which is in an especial Manner that of SANCTIFICATION, or rendering holy: as to distinguish him from all other Beings, which are characterised by the Name of Spirits.

Much Pains, I suppose, need not be taken to prove that this is the Sense of the Scriptures, that they intend we should conceive something MORE by the Term, than a mere Quality, &c. its entire Conformity thro'-out, maintaining both the PERSONALITY, and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, doth sufficiently confirm it. In this Sense, therefore, sufficiently authorized by the Scriptures, and agreeable to the uninterrupted Practice of the Apostolick Faith, and

Catholic

Catholic Church of Christ, we do receive and ex-
pound it.

In treating on this important Doctrine of Christi-
anity, I shall observe the following Method.

First, I shall prove the Personality and Divinity
of the Holy Ghost.

II. The Offices which he performs.

III. In what Respects he is conferred upon all
Men. And,

Lastly. The Returns due from us for the same.

I shall begin with those Proofs which tend to e-
vince that the Holy Ghost is not a Quality, but a
real Person. And here,

When we consider the Characters given him, and
the Works which are ascribed to him, we cannot
hesitate to acknowledge his Personality. For,

To whatever PERSONAL Actions are strongly and
expressly attributed, That must be a Person: but
Personal Actions are so attributed to the Holy Ghost,
who must, therefore, be a Person, & not a Quality.
For, the Holy Ghost both receives and executes a
Commission, (even the former, which cannot be
justly said of a Quality, much less the latter,) in
Serm. XI. Conse-

Consequence of which, he performs the following several personal Actions ; He is spoken of by Christ as a Comforter, whom the Father would Send in his Name : And to Come to his Disciples ; and when Come, to Teach them all things, and to Testify of God ; - to Reprove the World of Sin, and of Righteousnes, and of Judgment ; and to Guide them into all Truth, and to Show them things to come ; For he shall not Speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall Hear, that shall he Speak : He shall Glorifie me (saith Christ;) for he shall Receive of mine, & shall Show it unto you. Now,

What are all these Words, but so many Descriptions of a Person, - a Person, hearing, - receiving, testifying, - speaking, - reproving, - instructing.

In all these Places he is so plainly spoken-of, not as a Quality or Operation, but as a Person ; & that without any Key or Rule to understand the Words otherwise, that This alone may serve to determine the Matter.

To this, the PNEUMATOMACHI (A) answer, by re-solving

(A) *Pneumatomachi*, (or Opposers of the Spirit,) a general Name given to all those Hereticks, who denied either the Divinity, or the Personality of the Holy Ghost. At first they were called *Semi-Arians*, but afterwards they were distinguished from the *Arians*, who were called

solving the Whole into a certain Figure in Rhetorick, (PROSOPOPOEIA,) by which, personal Actions are attributed to, confessed Qualities; of which they produce an Instance, even in the Scriptures themselves, [viz.] in St. Paul's Eulogy on Charity, where she is said to be "kind, - to bear, - to suffer, - to think, "to rejoice, &c." - The Whole of which is not to be understood of Charity, as a Person; but of the Man or Person, in whom Charity is resident. In like Manner, (say they,) do those personal Actions which are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, belong only

to

called *Christomachi*, by this Title of *Pneumatomachi*.

It is uncertain who set this Heresy on Foot; however, it made very little Progress, till *Arius* espoused and taught it about the Beginning of the fourth Century.

Of these *Pneumatomachi*, some admitted the Holy Ghost to be a Person, but not a Divine Person, &c. Others absolutely denied both a Pleading, that the Words implied no more than a Quality, or Property, &c. of God the Father. — *Macedonius*, Bishop of Constantinople, tumultuously advanced to that Chair on Account of his Principles, (by the Arian Faction) & *Eustathius*, Bishop of Sebastea, appear'd openly at the Head of this Sect about the middle of the fourth Century.

When *Macedonius* refused to admit the Holy Spirit into a Participation of the Divinity in the Trinity, *Eustathius* also avowed the same Opinions. "For my Part, (says he,) I cannot think of giving to the Holy Ghost, the Title of God; nor yet do I know how to call him a Creature."

The Genius of the Times unfortunately screened them from any other Punishment than the Contempt of all good Men, and the (then unavailing) Censures of the Orthodox Party. Serm. LXI.

to God the Father, in whom that Spirit resides.

But, Though it is True, that Powers are indeed sometimes in Scripture, (according to the Nature of the Jewish Language,) spoken-of figuratively, as PERSONS; yet in the present Case, it is plain on the Contrary, that the PERSON of the Holy Ghost is often represented and spoken-of, as the Power of the Father, only because By Him it is that the Father works all Miracles, and bestows all Gifts. Besides,

If there appear to be certain Instances of PERSONAL Actions ascribed to the Holy Ghost, which are inconsistent and incompatible with God the Father, Proofs, which the Prosopopœia cannot reach, then must the Holy Ghost be yet considered as a distinct Person. As thus,

Intercession, (which is certainly a PERSONAL Act,) is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, - "The Spirit maketh Intercession for us." With whom? Even with God, the Father. But, does God, the Father, intercede for us with himself? Or, is the Act of Intercession any where supposed to be the Office of the First Person in the Eternal Godhead? Again,

The Holy Ghost is SENT, receives his Commission from the Son, jointly with the Father: He even derives something from the Son; for, "He shall Receive of Mine, (saith he,) and shall Show it unto you."

you." Which cannot be true of the Person, or even of a Quality of God the Father, who SENDETH, but is never SENT; — who Giveth liberally, but is incapable of RECEIVING himself, being in Himself all Fullness & Sufficiency, so that no Man can be profitable unto him. Again,

To Speak and Hear are personal Acts: but to speak as "not of himself," is, by no Means, applicable to God the Father. — Of whom then are we to interpret this? "When He is come, he will Guide you into all Truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall Hear, that shall he Speak," but of a Person distinct both from the Father and the Son?

These, and other like Texts, do plainly declare the Holy Spirit to be, not a mere Power or Operation, but a real Person sent forth from the Father & the Son, for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church. But further,

This Doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Ghost is founded on that sacred Form which was by Christ himself enjoined to be used at the Initiation of a Member into his Church. This, we consider it, is to the Point. — We are baptized "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Ghost." (A) This plainly makes the Holy Ghost a Person, since it cannot be said that we are to be called by the Name of a Virtue or Operation. The Father and the Son are confessedly Persons. This Quality or Operation, (if it be no more,) was already included in the Name of the Father, and needed not to have been selected for a particular Mention, any more than any other of God's Qualities: But the Conjunction of him with Two allowed Persons, the mere Force of the Words do prove the Holy Ghost to be something more than a Quality: in Fact, a true, real, and distinct Person; equally with the Father and the Son, the Object of our Trust, of our Service, and Worship. Again,

In Proof of this Doctrine, may we not remind you of the Holy Spirit's visible Appearance after our Lord's Baptism? The Occasion was grand and important: — Jesus was about to enter upon his public Ministry; on him the Spirit was to be poured without Measure; and behold him, in a bodily Shape, descending upon him. And this Event did not take place in a Corner, or where but few Spectators were assembled: but in a public Manner,

and

(A) Matt. 28, 19. From this Passage the Antients were wot to prove the Unity of Nature, and the Plurality of Persons in the Sacred Godhead.

his Personality proved.

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and in Sight of many Witnesses. — There was such a Manifestation of the Holy Spirit, as puts the thing past dispute.

The Part ascribed to him in that Circumstance, is such as plainly bespeaks Personality, for his Descent and Appearance were visible : it was the pre-declared Token to the Baptist, whereby he should know the Messiah. "I saw the Spirit &c." says St. John. Now, a VISIBLE Quality is a much greater Mystery than what the PNEUMATOMACHI cavil at. — The Holy-Ghost, therefore, is a Person, and a Person distinct both from the Father and the Son : for he rested visibly on the Head of the latter : and the former, ("whom no Man hath seen at any Time, nor can see," (i.e) in this present World,) declared himself at the same Instant, apart, by an audible Voice from Heaven.

Thus stands the Evidence of the Doctrine before us from Christ and his holy Gospel : - Accordingly, in the Epistles we have frequent Mention made of the Operations of the Spirit. Now,

It is not to be conceived, how that both our Saviour and his Apostles should use the Phrase of a Person so constantly in speaking of the Spirit, and should so critically, and in the Way of Argument pursue that Strain, if he is not a Person. - They not only insist

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on

on it, and repeat it frequently, but they draw an Argument from it for Union and Love, and for mutual Condescension and Sympathy.

Upon all these Grounds it is evident that the Holy Spirit is in the Scripture proposed to us as a Person, under whose Æconomy all the various Gifts, Administrations and Operations that are in the Church, are put. But further,

It is observable, that Simon, the Sorcerer, who set-up the Gnostic Heresy (A) within a very few Years after the Death of our Saviour, and during the Lives of almost all the Apostles, amongst other Impieties

(A) Simon, a pretended Convert to Christianity, (see Act. 8.) began the Gnostic Heresy, about four or five Years after our Saviour's Crucifixion. It were almost endless to enumerate all his ridiculous & blasphemous Conceits: This, however, he exacted of all his Followers that they should acknowledge him for the PARACLETE; the Holy Ghost; the Supreme Power, &c. — Montanus appeared in the same Character towards the Close of the Second Century: and, in short, after having been assumed by many, at different Times and Places, it was at last taken-up by that grand Impostor, Mahomet.

So that there always have been some who have considered the Holy Ghost as a Person; and if it be a Mistake, it is at least a very old One, having so antient an Author, as that of a Man who was co-temporary with our Saviour himself; broached, (as it were,) under the very Cross, overlooked by the Apostles, and patronized by the best & greatest Members of the Church in all successive Ages: A Duration that few Heresies besides can boast of.

Impieties, exhibited himself to his deluded Followers as the PARACLET, or Comforter, under which Title the Holy Ghost was by Christ promised to his Disciples, (in which he was followed by many of the first Heresiarchs, particularly Montanus;) Whence it is evident, that there was at That Time very little Notion of a Quality or Subject; for had not the general Sense of the Church declared for Personality at least in that Paraclete, Simon could never have thought of such an unaccountable Delusion: Nor is it at all improbable that some ignorant Christians carrying their Notions of this Personality too far, might give Birth to this Invention of his. However,

It was never objected either to him or Montanus by the Orthodox, that there was no such Person as the Holy-Ghost; and certainly it behoved the Apostles especially, who were most of them living, when Simon's Blasphemy was at its Height, to have used some Methods to prevent the Growth of so dangerous an Error, as is that of Personising a mere QUALITY, and ascribing Existence to what had no Being in Nature. And, How easy would it have been to quash not only Simon, but all Pseudo-Paracletes forever, by observing that there was an Error in the very Foundation, & that the Term, Holy-Spirit, implied not a Person, but only a Sub-

ject, - a Quality, - a Grace, - a Gift &c. Thus we might reasonably have expected from some of the Apostles or Apostolic Men, who were so industrious to detect & confute all other Innovations, as soon as they appeared. What, then, can this Silence here imply, but that they had nothing to object to this Part of the Article, and that Simon's whole Deceit lay, not in constituting the Holy Ghost into a Person, but in COUNTERFEITING that Person, and assuming a Character, which was indeed in Being, but did by no Means belong to him.

If, therefore, in that early Age of the Church, the Holy Ghost was considered as a Person, (as from hence it should seem he was,) we may surely venture to conclude, that it must have been on such Grounds as must fairly warrant the Belief of it to all succeeding Ages.

I have been rather concise in the Proof of this Particular; and many Passages have been omitted, which might have been, and usually are brought in this Behalf: but as there are some of them, which lie more opposed to the Socinian Prosopopæia; and as the Strength of those already urged, cuts-off the Necessity of recurring to other Arguments; Polixity is therefore to be avoided, which rather confuses

than illustrates, and such only be used as are not affected by that Division. Therefore, to what hath been already said concerning the Personality of the Holy Ghost, I shall only add the Properties which are in Scripture ascribed to him. And here,

If we attend to those Attributes which are predicted of him in Scripture, we shall have abundant Confirmation of his Personality. Knowledge and Judgment are possessed by him in an infinite Degree. By those rational Powers with which God has endowed our Souls, we are capable of enquiring into, and reflecting upon their Nature: we are acquainted with the Designs and Purposes they form, and are led to regulate our Conduct agreeably to them. Now, as the Human Spirit is acquainted with the Things which concern the Man; so, and in a much clearer Manner, the Holy Ghost is acquainted with the Things of God. He is acquainted with the infinite Nature, eternal Counsels, and profound Designs of the Deity. Created Faculties, how exalted soever they may be, can attain but to a limited Knowledge of God; but the Knowledge of the Spirit is boundless and infinite as the Subject; and this Knowledge is intuitive; for tho' he be represented as SEARCHING, (a Language used concerning Person, and not a Quality,) it is in such a Manner

as Jehovah searches the Hearts of Men, which intimates not a Defect of Knowledge, but a strict Attention to the Subject. Again,

To whom, we may ask, can Volition be properly applied, but to a Person? But the Holy Spirit performs his Operations according to his sovereign Will. We might apply this Observation to the Works of Nature and to the Dispensations of Providence; but our Attention will chiefly be confined to Subjects more important, even to those, which regard the Church of the living God. And we find the Holy Ghost employed in Choosing and Qualifying the Instruments and Means by which the Purposes of the Deity are to be accomplished; by which the Souls of Men are to be benefited; & the Views of Christ compleated. And as it is necessary for the Comfort & Advantage of Society, that there should be due Subordination in it; so the Instruments which he uses, have different Endowments for the different Parts they are called to perform. He knows where to find Persons who shall be subservient to his Designs; - When to call them forth to Action, - and when to dismiss them from their Employment. (A)

When

(A) St. Paul, in a long Discourse upon the Diversity of Gifts Administrations and Operations, ascribes them all to one Spirit, &

When we consider the Nature of those devotional Exercises required of us, and our natural Unfitness to perform any good Work : When we see Men successfully opposing Sin, mortified to the World, and rising to the Enjoyment of God, we readily suppose this Conduct is the Effect of supernatural Influence upon their Minds ; And, to whom are they indebted for this important Aid, but to the Spirit of God ? The first Advocates for Christianity, as well as many in succeeding Ages, were called to encounter great Difficulties ; they met with violent Opposition from Men of Influence & Power; indeed some who were placed in the most exalted Stations, thought themselves well employed in seeking their Confusion and Destruction : But Jesus tells his Disciples to be unconcerned about what they shall answer in such Circumstances; for the Holy Ghost, (says he,) shall teach you in the same Hour what ye ought to say. And again, it is not Ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. — Should we confine our Attention to the most difficult Precepts of Christianity and take a View of the Trials which await good Men, or judge from the outward Circumstances of many, we should be ready to account them of all conciousness, & said to have no knowledge of others. Now I am not speaking of the Author and Fountain, of whom he speaks as a Person, distributing them in Order to several Ends, & in different Measures, as he will.

others the most miserable ; but were we acquainted with their inward Supports, refined Pleasures, and strong Consolations, we should then have Reason to say, they are of all others most blessed : & this Blessedness proceeds from the Holy Ghost, who is the Comforter of holy Souls. But,

It is not enough, to have proved the Existence & Being of the Holy Ghost, and to have rescued him from the Attacks of those, who would reduce him to a mere Form, Quality, or Subject ; or something only Ideal : since there are very many of his most strenuous Opposers who readily admit as much ; but at the same Time, offer him at least an equal Indignity, by supposing him to be a CREATED Being, & at best but chief of the Ministering Spirits, who attend the Throne of God. Proceed we, therefore,

Secondly, To show that He is not only a Person, but a DIVINE Person. And here,

If the Holy Ghost be only a Creature, what Confusion must follow from ascribing to him the Operation in the Conception of the Blessed Jesus ! which is nevertheless, expressly done by as many of the holy Writers as speak at all of that Circumstance.

An Angel impregnating a mortal Woman, favours a little too much of the Heathen Theology ;

and

and gives us rather an Idea of the Jovial Amours of Jupiter and his Fellow-Deities, than of the miraculous Conception of a pure and immaculate Virgin, which seems to be a Task peculiar to Omnipotence and therefore, not to be ascribed to any Creature whatever. This was the Reason assigned by the Angel, why Christ, (with Respect to his Incarnation,) should be called The Son of God, because the blessed Virgin was to conceive by the sole Influence of the Holy Ghost. (Luke 1, 34.)

Here then, the Holy Ghost must be acknowledged to be God, or else Recourse must again be had to the Supposition of a Quality or Energy, which is, (I hope,) sufficiently refuted. But,

Secondly, The Name and Title of God is expressly given to the Holy Ghost by One of those very Persons, who having been just filled with his sacred Influence, must necessarily be allowed to be the best qualified to testify of him to the World.

Upon Ananias attempting to withhold Part of the Price of his Land, and giving a false Account of the Sum arising from the Sale of it. 'Why,' (saith the Apostle to him,) 'hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine Heart? Thou hast not lied to man, sa-
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lyed unto Men, but unto God." In the former Part of the Sentence, the Person lyed unto, is the Holy Ghost; in the latter, it is expressed, God. Now, What other warrantable Conclusion can be drawn from hence, but that God and the Holy Ghost are the same?

The Prophet Isaiah had an august Vision of the Lord of Hosts, which was the Holy Ghost, according to St. Paul, in the last Chapter of the Acts.

Angels, indeed, are sometimes called Gods in Scripture; this Appellation is given to them to teach us their excellent Nature, and because they declare the Mind of God to others; but their Inferiority to the great Jehovah is clearly marked out, as they are commanded to worship his Son Jesus Christ. And tho' Magistrates are called Gods, yet we cannot mistake by applying this to their Nature, instead of their Office. This magnificent Title, the Lord of Hosts, can never be applicable to any Creature. It is therefore, just to conclude, that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, and that all the Attributes of the Deity are applicable to him. He existeth in, and of himself, - depends upon no external Cause or superior Power, nor can any possible Addition be made to his Happiness. He is also Incomprehensible.

prehensible, for we cannot by searching find out God; we cannot find out the Almighty to Perfection; we perceive somewhat of his Excellencie in the Operations he performs, but the more attentively they are surveyed, the more wonderfull they appear; and we have Reason to acknowledge, that the utmost Stretch of Thought is baffled, and all our Powers confounded; As the Wind is invisible, but its Power great, so the Nature of the Divine Spirit is but little known, whilst his Works declare his Power and Godhead, most infallibly to us.

Another Evidence for the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, arises from what has been already urged in Proof of his Personality, [viz] his Conjunction with the Father and the Son in the Form prescribed for Baptism.

We are dedicated to him equally with the other Two Persons in the Blessed Trinity: And if those Two Persons are confessedly Divine, it were surely greatly to derogate from their Dignity to conjoin with them any Creature.

We are instructed, then, in the Doctrine of the Trinity by the Founder of our Religion. The Son and the Holy Ghost are joined with the Father in that holy Ordinance.

If further, by being baptized "In the Name of,"

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be

be implied, being baptized into the Belief & Worship of this Being, as Commentators explain it, (A) and as the Practice of both the Jewish and (uncorrupt) ancient Christian Churches seem to justify, then is EACH of the Persons really and truly God, or we are baptized into Idolatry, a God and a Creature. Whereas, The express Command is, " Thou " shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only."

Another, & no less conclusive Proof, we are supplied-with from the Apostolical Benediction. " The " Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of " God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, be " with you." Which is evidently not so much a tender and benevolent Wish, as a formal & solemn Prayer. But Prayer is not due to, nor are Blessings of any Kind derivable from, any other Being than God, " from whom only every good and perfect Gift cometh."

To join a Creature with the Father and the Son in the same Invocation, were to offer them an unpardonable Indignity ; at the same Time that it argues a most gross and palpable Absurdity, to imagine that those, to whom Christ should have already imparted

(A) See Piscator, Lightfoot and others, on Matt. 28, 19.
See also Note (A) Vol. I. Page 13.

imparted his Grace, and God the Father his Love, yet stand in Need of, or receive any additional Happiness, from the Communion or Fellowship of any CREATED OR SUBORDINATE Being, whatever. "The Holy Ghost, then, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one Substance, Majesty, and Glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." (A)

It cannot be improper to introduce here an Instance or two of the Sentiments of those Persons in this Respect; who, by their Nearness to the Apostolic Age, (so as almost to be cotemporary with them,) ought to have some Weight & Authority in the Christian Church among all succeeding Ages.

Thus then speaks Irenæus before the Close of the SECOND Century — "The Church, which was planted throughout the whole World, received of the Apostles, and their Disciples, that Faith which in one Jesus Christ the Son of God; and in the an unHoly-Ghost, who spake by the Prophets." — This is not the Faith of Irenæus only, but according to his Assertion, of the Whole preceding Church, and of the Apostles themselves.

Thus also Tertullian, much about the same Time,
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"The Holy-Ghost, the Third Name of the God-head, and the Third Person in the Order and Rank of the Divine Majesty." — and thus Justin Martyr, prior to either of them ; "We worship & adore the Prophetic Spirit." — And again, "Acknowledging the Son of the true God himself, and placing him as next in Order, and ~~then~~ the Prophetic Spirit — we will shew that we justly honour them."

If to these Considerations we add, -the incommunicable Attributes of Divinity which are ascribed to the Holy-Ghost by almost numberless Passages in the holy Writings, and that such Acts are also assigned to him, as are wholly inconsistent with any inferior Essence, the thing will, (I am persuaded,) stand beyond the Reach of Dispute. Thus,

An Existence that is ETERNAL, properly belongs to God. Angels & Men, indeed, are made for an everlasting Duration, but they are not Eternal, which signifies from Everlasting to Everlasting ; but we read of the ETERNAL Spirit, which Attribute ought to fill us with Reverence of him, and to convince us of his proper Divinity. Again,

Omnipresence and Immensity belong to the Spirit of God ; this is maintained by the Psalmist, who represents him as dwelling individually in his people

his Divinity proved.

but can this be true of any Creature whatever? Is it
possible for any created Spirit to fill universal Space?
To pervade the whole Creation? To be present in
all Places at one and the same Time? And not only
to fill, but exceed all finite Extension & Duration?
- But the Spirit of the Lord is present with his Peo-
ple, to support, defend, and comfort them; there-
fore they become superior to the numerous Hosts of
their Foes. Again, and ye shall see how

Almighty Power distinguishes the true God from
all others: Ability to accomplish all his Purposes,
and an irresistible Dominion over all his Creatures;
but we are assured that the Spirit of the Lord is not
straitened; and read of mighty Signs and Wonders
done by the Power of God. Who at first spread-
forth the Heavens as a Curtain? Who kindled up
the bright Luminaries above us? Who laid the
Foundations of the Earth? Reduced Chaos to that
Order and Beauty which we now behold? Who
peopled the World with its vast Tribes of Inhabi-
tants, and bounteously supplies their innumerable
Wants? Who gave to Man his Dignity and supe-
riority over the other Creatures? Who gathereth
the Waters of the Sea together as an Heap, and
layeth-up the Depth in Store-Houses? Who ap-
pointed the Vicissitudes of the Seasons, and the re-
gular

gular Succession of Day and Night ? Who ? but the Spirit of God , of whom we are told , when the Earth was without Form and Void , and Darkness was upon the Face of the Deep , moved upon the Face of the Waters. But,

We shall find the Power of the Holy Ghost no less conspicuous in the New , than in the Old Creation. How vast the Misery brought upon the Human Race by their Apostacy from God ? But those that were dead in Trespasses and Sins , He quickens by his Spirit. It is the Spirit that giveth Life. To him it is , (i.e) to his all-powerful Inspiration and Assistance , that we owe all the Graces and Virtues of a good Life ; and by the Practice of which it is that we have Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost .

But this will be more fully seen in the Offices he performs. Therefore further,

As almighty Power, so Fore-Knowledge and Omnipotence are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

The Prediction of FUTURE Events , (which is one chief Part of the Office of the Spirit,) is an especial Mark of Divinity , being the very Test by which God requires his People to try those imaginary Deities they were inclined to worship. "Let them bring forth , and shew us what shall happen ; Let them shew the FORMER Things what they be , that we may

may consider them, and know the latter End of them; or declare to us things that are to come hereafter; that we may know that ye are Gods." Now,

If we consider how very large a Share this has in the sacred Books, how strong, nervous, and particular are the greatest Part of the Predictions, how many of them have been already accomplished, and how nicely the Events have agreed with those prophetic Accounts, we must soon discover the Nature of the Being from whom they are derived, and be satisfied that they are far different from the ambiguous Oracles of the Heathens, the fortunate Guesses of Men, the Delusions of evil Spirits, or even the Declarations of good Angels, who in this Case can do no more than guess, Fore-Knowledge being, (as it appears,) pertinent to no Character but that of the Deity.

It is not in the Power of Man to pry into Future: The Author, therefore, of these Prophecies must surely know all things. But let us not think that this is the only Instance of the Prophetic Spirit's Wisdom, for we read that "Prophecy came not in Old Time, by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Here we see the Spirit of God is to be considered as the Author of Prophecy in general: He influ-

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ced

ced the Minds of his Servants to fore-tell future Events for the Good of his People : He could look thro' an infinite Series of Occurrences, so as to know when Each would take-place : An incontestible Proof of his Omnipotence.

Simeon fore-knew "that he should not see Death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ," — but, "it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost ;" — Thus again, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, (says the Apostle,) that Bonds and Afflictions abide me." "Thus saith the Holy Ghost," saith Agabus.

I shall not here adduce more Instances of this Kind, as there will be a Sufficiency, necessarily interwoven in that Part, in which I am to shew what is the particular Office of this Third Person of the sacred Trinity ; which is, in an especial Manner, that of SANCTIFICATION : from whence he derives that Appellation, by which he stands distinguished from the other Two Persons in the Godhead. Again,

It is allowed, on all Hands, to be impious to pay religious Worship to any Being but the true God. This is a Right of Deity, which he will not impart to another. But, does it not appear from Scripture, that religious Adoration is given to the Holy Ghost ? Let us here again recollect Isaiah's Vision : The Seraphims cried One to Another, and said

"Holy,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory." This appears to be an Act of Worship from those exalted Beings to the Blessed Trinity. Again, What does St. Paul mean when he says, "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all?" Does he not pray to Christ for his Grace, - to the Father for his Love, and to the Holy Ghost for the Bestowment of his Influence and Blessing? And, have we not a similar Prayer to the Holy Ghost by the Apostle St. John, in the Beginning of the Revelation? Where he thus expresses himself, "Grace be unto you, and Peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the Seven Spirits which are before his Throne:" Tho' to some there might appear a Difficulty, how to understand this latter Phrase, we in Conjunction with many good Expositors, believe it is spoken of the Holy Ghost, so described, on Account of his various Operations.

To the same Purpose is what the Apostle to the Thessalonians writes, "The Lord direct your Hearts into the Love of God, and into the patient Waiting for Christ." Here we have God and Christ mentioned, but who is the Lord who directs our Hearts into this Love and Patience, but the

Holy Ghost? And it is said in another Place, "Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our Way unto you." And "the Lord make you to increase and abound in Love one towards another."

We are taught by the same inspired Penman that the Saints are the Temple of God; and so called, because the Spirit of God dwelleth in them. They are his Temple, where his Altar is erected, and where Worship is paid to him.

Let these Considerations be well weighed, and they will have a Tendency to establish the Doctrine meant to be proved.

I shall only add to the foregoing that Argument drawn in Proof hereof from the Irremissibleness of the Sin that shall be committed against the Holy Ghost.

Among Men, when an Offence is committed, it is generally considered as aggravated according to the Dignity of the Person offended. This Observation is certainly applicable when we sin against God; we cannot know how much Evil and Demerit there is in it, because we know not the Glory and Dignity of the Divine Character; but this we are sure of, that Sin against the Holy Ghost is the greatest that can be committed, having never Forgiveness, and drawing after it the heaviest Punishments.

God because the Sin against the Holy Ghost is mortal,
and in that it is impossible to forgive it, because it is God.
It might proceed from simple Texts, but doubtless
these are sufficient to prove, that the Holy Ghost is
a Person, and not a mere Quality or Attribute of
God; and also that the Person of the Holy Ghost is one
and distinct from the Father and the Son: And, together
with the Father and the Son, is very and true God,
to which not only the Catholic Church of
Christ has always maintained, as drawn from, and
proved by clear Testimony of divine Revelation,
but which also our Adversaries have divided among
them, and therein approved our Exposition.

Does the Church teach that the Holy Ghost is
God? So acknowledge ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{the}
^{not prejudiced in favour of the Catholic Opinion,}
^{but convinced by the plainness of the Scripture-}
^{Books, which they think so strong, as to infer from}
^{thence, that he is no other than God the Father.}

Does the Church teach moreover, that the Holy
Ghost is a Person, and distinct from the Father?
This is evidenced for this is so obvious through the
whole Testament, that ACTS and MECORDATI,
established by the Authority of the Church as they
themselves, do draw the same Conclusion from the
same

from Scriptures; & believe him a Person so distinct, as to make him a Creature, as is also asserted by

Search the Scriptures; their obvious Meaning teaches this Doctrine; - if we doubt, consult their early Expositors; this is their Interpretation: - examine what Adversaries say, they are not agreed together, but the Result of their Evidence is a Confession of these Truths. Appeal to Councils; this is their decreed Form of Faith. From all which, we believe in the "Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of Life;" therefore a Person: "proceeding from the Father," and therefore distinct from him: "who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;" which ought not to be unless he be God.

As to the Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, there was a Dispute which long subsisted betwixt the Eastern & Western Churches. The Eastern chose to stick close to the Words of Scripture, which expressly mentions only his Procession from the Father: & were jealous of the western Church, lest they should infuse two Fountains of the Divinity, while they maintained his Procession from the Son, as well as from the Father. But the western Church intended no such Conclusion as the Greeks were afraid of; yet hold the Procession from

The Son is sonic the Father and the Son were, not
two separated from each other Divinity nor the body
of Christ has been so body like two divided substance and the
single and inseparable chain. Opinion which can easily
be deduced from Scripture, which teaches us that
he, in "the Spirit of God," (1 Cor. viii. 6.) and call
himself from the same "the Spirit of the Father, of the
Son, and of the Holy Ghost," (Rom. xi. 13. Phil. i. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 13.) If the Father be said to send him to all
Christ promises, "I will send him to you." (John,
xvi. 26.) or If he be said expressly to proceed from
the Father, he is no less clearly intimated to proceed
from the Son, as when he says, "the Holy Ghost
"shall receive of mine," (John, xvi. 14.) But,
if Jealousy of Error began the Dispute, a proper
Indigation in the Greeks widened it, because the
Latins presumed to add the Clause to their Creed,
without the Sanction of a Council. However, they
are and were all along agreed in the Truth itself
that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Both: the Conclu-
sion of the Greeks was not more so denied so much,
but the Forwardness of the Latins to offer more.
The Holy Ghost therefore is, "a Person, proceeding
from the Father & the Son, distinct from each,
and of God:" to which when we have added, that
Serm. LXI. " yet

My brethren all three God, I add that he is ~~one~~
genuinely; "not another but the same God with the
Father and the Son;" we have then declared the
whole Scripture Account of what the Holy Ghost is.
And here, our Adversaries triumph over the Cri-
mality of the Catholic Christians, whose Faith can
swallow such Absurdities. For this Antiscripturists
(reject the) Evidence of divine Revelations and New-
Testament Scripturists explain it ~~now~~ ^{now}; both betraying
their Consent, that the plain Sense of Scripture is
against them; both agreeing to supersede its Auth-
ority, & carry their Appeal from thence to the Sen-
sation. But it is as absurd, as an Appeal of Sounds to
the Eye, or of Colours to the Ear. How can they
be the sufficient Judges of what never fell within
their Notice, of what "neither Eye has seen, nor
Ear heard?" The Terms in which the Truths are
expressed, we acknowledge, are improper; and if
strictly taken, and pursued through all their Conse-
quences, will certainly lead us into Error, if not into
Absurdity. But it is not our Faith in the Trinity
only, but our Faith in God, that is subject to the
same Inconveniences. We are informed, that "the
EYES of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his
EARS are open to their Prayers; but the Face of
the Lord is against them that do Evil." Yet how is

Philosophy without Truth, and has neither Body, Parts, or Passion. Or if we believe that God is infinite; consider his Infinite Power of Space, which implies Multiplicity, or Extension; but God is one, as well as without Parts; and to make a multitude of One, is not less a Mystery than the Trinity, and Extension without Parts is an Absurdity in Philosophy! Such inadequate Judges are our Senses of spiritual and divine Truths! So untractably do our Imaginations delude them!

That we cannot form a full, clear, and consistent Idea of whom, is not owing to any real Absurdity in the Doctrines, but the Disproportion of our Faculties to receive them; and their being ABOVE human Comprehension, is an Argument that they did not spring from Human Invention.

But of what Use, then, is Reason in Religion, if it is inadequate to divine Subjects? Must we not shakely Enquiries, and believe implicitly? - By no Means! Religion is supreme Reason; and tho' we are too short-sighted to discover all the Agreements and Harmony which constitute it, yet certainly we ought not to shut our Eyes on that Account; we are Religious Creatures only because we are reasonable Ones. And Revelation is so far from Turbing and confining the Exercise of Reason, that

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Of the Holy Ghost.

on the contrary, it enlarges it; opens a wider Field for Expansive and given new Principles to build upon, and a greater Variety of Premises to conclude from. The Error of Bigoted Free-thinkers too, is, in not giving sufficient Freedom and Scope to Thought. The first wrap up their Talents in a Napkin, unreasonably dreading the Austerity of their Master : the Others venture but Half their Principle, and use but a Moiety of the Treasure put into their Hands : their Reason travelth no further than their Eyes or Ears, nor listens, (though God himself speaks,) to any thing but the Report of their Senses. Whereas Truths revealed by God, must be as solid a Foundation to conclude from, as our own Experience. The Senses are indeed placed as Centinels to guard against Error : and therefore let us should reject God's Word, or give an easy Ear to human Imposture, he has been pleased to give feasible Evidence that it came from him, and to seal his Revelations with Variety of Miracles. But when our Senses have satisfied us, that the Revelation does come from God, their Judgment afterwards would be very impertinent concerning the Properties, Affections, and Relations of divine Objects. (*) But Reason proceeds never the less safe,

(*) When Nicodemus, who had acknowledged Christ to be a Teacher

and unbarrassed, and judges from proper Evidence; not measuring ~~merely~~ by ~~the~~ Visible, but laying the several Parts of the Revelation together, and comparing Spiritual things with spiritual.

This is the Ground on which we fix our Belief in these things, and is as firm and unshaken, as Evidence itself, where Matters of Sense are only concerned.

"Nature, He hath each boy things."

Teacher sent from God, impertinently asked him of his Doctrine, "How can these things be?" instead of Explication. He rests himself upon the Authority had Sufficiency of the Evidence. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know; and testify that we have seen." Now, if we apply this, that ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Scriptures~~ ^{Scripture} ~~have~~ ^{has} Contradictions may be admitted; for this plain Observation may be made, that when both the Terms of a Proposition are used only in an analogical, and not a proper Sense, Or our Ideas are inadequate both to the Subject and the Predicate, such that there is ~~a~~ ^{is} Contradiction, then prove it.

Sermon

SERMON LXII

On the same Subject.

John xiv. 26. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you things."

Having already from their Words, confirmed the Doctrine of the Personality & Divinity of the Holy Ghost, we shall now proceed to the next general Head proposed, [viz] The Offices which He performs. — And here, The several Offices which the Scripture teaches us he performs, are as follow, [viz] that it was He who inspired the Prophets of Old, to testify beforehand of the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow : - that he was afterwards sent-forth in a more particular and extraordinary Manner, to be the Comforter, Director, and Guide of the Apostles, to lead them into all Truth ; to bring to their Remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had before said unto them ; to support them against the Power of the World ; to instruct them what to answer

and force in their Persecutors; to be the great Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, by working Signs and Wonders & mighty Works, by inspiring the Apostles with the Gift of Tongues, and dividing to their Followers Diversities of Gifts; and finally, to continue with all good Christians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of Men; sanctifying them, not by working upon them mechanically as Machines, but by moral Motives in rational Beings; assisting them with his Grace, admonishing them with his Holy Influences, working with them, and inspiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the Infinitiy of their Prayers with an Energy that cannot be expressed.

These are the several Officers & Operations of the Spirit. As First,

The Holy Ghost reveals to us the Truths of Religion; for "the Prophecy came not in Old Time, by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" Whatever Instructions, whatever Threats, Promises, or Predictions were given immediately by the Prophets and Apostles, are to be considered as coming immediately from Him, "who spake by the Prophets;" They are not the Words of Isaiah, of David, or of this or that Prophet; For, as it is written, - "Well spake

spake the Holy Ghost by Elias the Prophet, saying, "thus, or thus; — Again, "as the Holy Ghost saith, so Day, if ye will hear his Voice." &c.

But further, By Him we are led to the Discovery of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, as it signifies the Gospel-Dispensation; for He it is, who was appointed to "testify of Christ," — to "guide" his Infant Church "into the Way of Truth," — "to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their Remembrance," whatsoever Christ had before said unto them. Again,

The Holy Ghost prepares us for the Reception of those Truths, operating both upon our Understandings and Affections, enlarging our Hearts, and inspiring us with a lively Faith, and a religious Hope. — That "Lydia attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul, was because "the Lord had opened her Heart." Those who were "added daily to the Church," were added "by the Lord." and lastly, As "no Man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; so no Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

And, having by this Means taught us "what that good, acceptable, & perfect Will of the Lord is," He proceedeth, further,

To

To enable us to fulfil the same, by warning us from our natural Impurity, teaching us to subdue our innate Aversion to Good, and Propensity to Evil, (in which our natural Corruption consists,) restraining us by a sensible Compunction from Acts of Wickedness, (and that so forcibly, that it is with Difficulty that Men, obstinately bent on Sin, do at last overcome the Check,) inciting us to Virtue by representing to us the amiable Effects of it; encouraging and promoting every little Motion of the Heart, which tends towards it, and giving his Plaintiff to good Actions in an internal Satisfaction and Complacency of Mind: In a Word, have we got the better of a Temptation, have we zealously applied to any Duty of our Religion, have we formed any pious Resolution, conquered any Doubts, mastered any Difficulty, which impeded our Progress in divine Knowledge? — It belongeth not unto us, but must be ascribed entirely to this Spirit, from whom we have received “ both to Will and to Do , and without whom, we are not able to think any thing of Ourselves. Again,

To qualify us for the Blessings of Heaven, He exhorts us to do our Duty. He abides with us forever, if we do not constrain him to give us up to our Folly. And He continually follows us with Persuasives to

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a good Life. Every religious Thought, every honest Intention proceeds from Him ; He waits for a proper Season of speaking to us, meets us "in the Openings of the Gates," & at every Turning ; lays such Train of Occurrences, as are most likely to induce us to our Duty, recommends the happy Opportunity of saving our Souls, and endeavours to prepare our Minds, that we may act in the fortunate Juncture, in such a Manner as will be for our everlasting Advantage. — How often does he whisper to us, " This do, and live." — " This is the Way, walk ye in it, when we turn to the Right-Hand, and when we turn to the Left :" and with Care sows the Seed of God's Word in our Hearts ! How constantly does he water the tender Plant ! How does he labour to season our Minds with Virtue ! Do we often find ourselves struck with some affecting Truth ? and are we not pleased to see the Impression ? When we are inflamed with a pious Discourse, or a beautiful Description of Religion, a lively Representation of the Rewards of Righteousness, or the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter ; It is the Holy Spirit that speaks to us by his Ministers, that gives the Truths of Religion their full Force and Efficacy, that beseeches us to be happy, and with an affectionate Concern, persuades us to avoid the Way that leads to Misery.

And

And, That we may not want anything that is requisite to bring us to the everlasting Enjoyment of himself, he supports us with his Comforts; & these he abundantly supplies us with in the Time of Trial, and after we have strove to gain the Conquest. Agreeably to the Condition we were designed for here below, he permits us to fall into Temptations. But to prevent our yielding to them, he is always ready to help us, and then most especially tenders himself to us when our Case most requires it; and, if Men do not presume too-far, or leave the whole Business to him, without the least Concurrence on their Part; will certainly either remove the Temptation, or render their Virtue more glorious in triumphing over it. Hence it is, that they sometimes maintain their Ground against the most violent Opposition, and perceive that they are endued with greater Strength, than they were ever conscious of before. As the Evils of this World come fast upon them, "like a wide breaking-in of Waters" their Resolutions are more and more confirmed; and their Almighty Comforter bids them stand-up undaunted, in the midst of those Sufferings, at the Expectation of which Nature trembled, and the Succours of Reason were ready to forsake them, and fly-away. Hence it is that they have preserved their Innocence, though almost

almost every thing else that was dear to them, came in Competition with it; and have received the most astonishing Tidings of ill Fortune, with an easy Indifference, a generous Contempt, and a noble Bravery. But,

Let us remember the Conditions that will qualify us for his Presence; and prepare a Place for him in our Hearts: Let us cleanse our Thoughts, and keep our Intentions pure and unspotted, that our Prayers may be such as he will approve, such as he will condescend to make known to the Father and enforce with his powerful Intercessions.

Let us hearken to his kind Exhortations, and consider, how inexcusable, and ungrateful, as well as unnatural it is, to disobey his repeated Admonitions, when it is for our Sakes he speaks to us, when it can be no Addition to his own Happiness, when the Motives he uses to prevail upon us, are the strongest Obligations to the Practice of Virtue, or Dissuasives from Vice, [viz] eternal Happiness, or endless Misery.

Let us endeavour to answer his important Designs in coming down to abide with us. Let us not grieve his Holy Spirit who endears himself to us by the Name of Comforter, and who is pleased to represent himself as rejoicing with our Conscience and glorying in our Conquest over Sin.

Let us not have this to aggravate our Torments that we refused to be intreated by God himself, when he vouchsafed to be our Companion, and familiar Friend, that he might save us.

Let us not chuse the Society of accursed Spirits, when the Holy Ghost has wrooth and besought us to receive him, and offered to abide with us here on Earth, that we might abide with him for ever in Heaven.

I cannot close these Considerations better than with St. Paul's Account of the Character and Office of the Holy Spirit, which will supply us with some further Proofs both of his Personality and Divinity, at the same Time that they give us a more extensive View of his Power and Efficacy.

"To one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom; to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit; to another the Gifts of Healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of Miracles; to another, Prophecy; to another, discerning of Spirits; to another, divers Kinds of Tongues; to another, the Interpretation of Tongues; but all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man, severally as He will." Which brings me

III. To the Tokens and Evidences of his being conferred upon All Men.

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At

At the first Effusion of the Spirit upon the Apostles — miraculous Effects were the Consequence of it. — This also was generally the Effect of its coming AFTERWARD upon New Converts at their Baptism. And when this miraculous Effect ceased, yet still the receiving of the Holy Ghost was as constant and as necessary as ever ; because, " Except a man be born of the Spirit, as well as of Water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." — " Tis Now true, as well as it was THEN, that " if any Man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ; " and that " the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in us, except we be Reprobates."

The way to know whether any Person has this Spirit dwelling in him, or No ; is by the FRUITS of the Spirit ; For " the Tree is known by its Fruit," Now, the Fruits of the Spirit, are either TEMPORARY OR PERPETUAL ; TEMPORARY, such as are the MIRACULOUS Gifts " of speaking with Tongues, prophesying, healing Diseases, and the like." Or PERPETUAL ; such as are the MORAL Dispositions & Habits of the Mind, worked in us by the Spirit of God, improved in us by his continual Assistance, and acceptable to him in the Performance ; [viz] Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth, as St. Paul reckons them up ; and more largely, " The Fruit of the Spirit,

Spirit," necessary to be found at all Times in every baptized Person; otherwise his Baptism is nothing else, but merely the washing-away the Filth of the Flesh; so that, being born of Water only, and not of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." In whomsoever these Moral Fruits of the Spirit are found, the other Miraculous and Extra-ordinary ones are Now unnecessary; And even THEN, at the first preaching of the Gospel, when they were the most needful of all, yet were they useless and unprofitable to those very Persons in whom they most abounded, if the MORAL Fruits of the Spirit were not found in Conjunction with them. By the Habits of Piety and true Holiness, Men may Now show themselves as full of the Holy Ghost as ever, WITHOUT any miraculous Gifts; with the greatest Abundance of which, they were still void of the Holy Ghost even THEN, if not indued with Piety and true Holiness. For MIRACULOUS Gifts, were but Signs of the Holy Spirit working BY them, not IN and UPON them. And therefore such Gifts were useful, rather to others than themselves; to convince Beholders, rather than to sanctify the Persons; "Tongues, (saith St Paul,) are for a Sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." But MORAL Virtues, are Evidences of the Spirit's dwelling IN Men, and sanctifying Men's Hearts and Lives.

Lives: Which to themselves is the End and the Effect of That Belief, the producing but the first Beginnings whereof in Others, is all that is intended by MIRACULOUS GIFTS. These extraordinary Gifts, therefore, were only OPERATIONS of the Spirit; But Righteousness and Holiness are properly called its FRUITS. Fruits of the Spirit; because worked, not as the others, extrinsically, necessarily, and without the Concurrence of the Persons themselves; but worked in the Mind, and with the free Choice and Will of the Person, by the Approbation, Assistance, and Help of the Spirit of God, concurring with him, not barely operating by him. For which Reason, These are never found but in Good Men; being indeed the Qualifications which denominate Men such: But the Others were often bestowed even upon hypocritical Persons; whom our Saviour, though they had done in his Name many wonderful Works, yet declares he will reject from him, as being at the same time Workers of Iniquity. And hence it is, that our Lord Makes that remarkable Distinction, "In This rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven!" (i.e.) 'tis a thing much more valuable, to be a good Man, than to be able to cast out Devils. Hence also it is,

that St Paul gives so manifest a Preference to Works of Righteousness, before miraculous Gifts, "Have All, the Gifts of healing ? - Do All speak with Tongues ? - Do All interpret ? But covet earnestly the best Gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent Way ;" a Way yet more excellent, even than the best Gifts. — And what That is, he tells us in the next Words ; " Though I speak with the Tongues of Men & of Angels, & have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or tinkling Cymbal ! And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge ; and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains ; and have no Charity, I am nothing." — If I have no Charity ; (i.e) if I am not indued with a Spirit of Universal Love and Goodness towards Men. For so it is remarkable in the whole New Testament, that the word CHARITY never signifies, as it does Now in common Speech, the mere giving of Alms to the poor ; but it always means, in a larger Signification, That Love and Desire of doing good to all Men, which is opposed to Uncharitableness, Hatred, Animosity and the like, as is particularly evident in the Verse next following ; where Charity is expressly distinguished from giving Alms to the Poor, u the WHOLE of a Duty is from its PART : - " Tho'

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I

I give, (saith he,) my Body to be burned, & though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity," (that is, have not an universally good and righteous Spirit,) " it profiteth me nothing."

Though therefore, the Apostles &c. who were to spread the Gospel over the World, on their being baptized with the Holy Ghost, were then endued with miraculous Gifts and Powers; such as speaking with Tongues, healing Diseases, and the like: Yet still, after the Reason of these miraculous Operations ceased, every Christian is baptized with the Holy Ghost as well as with Water; and his INTERNAL sanctifying Gifts and Graces, are to continue with us always even unto the End of the World. But,

It may here, perhaps, be inquired, Does not the Spirit of God distribute to every Man severally as he himself " willeth?" " Does not the Wind blow where it listeth," (By which Allusion our Saviour represents the Manner of his Operation upon every one that is born of the Spirit,) And are we not " justified freely by God's grace?" And does not the Apostle accordingly require us humbly to acknowledge, " Who maketh thee to differ from another?" How then can it be objected to any Man as a FAULT, or as a DEFECT in HIMSELF, that he has not received

(A) See the Discourses on Regeneration in Baptism, Vol. I. pages 67. - 85. &c.

received the Holy Ghost ; or that he is not indued with those Gifts and Graces, which are not his own Acquirement, but the free Distributions of the Spirit of God ?

To give a clear and satisfactory Answer to this Difficulty , it is necessary that we attend to the following Distinction . As First,

Some Gifts of the Spirit are mere external miraculois Powers ; such as speaking with Tongues , healing Diseases , and the like : And of these it is, that the Apostle declares, that the Spirit so divides to every Man severally as he willeth, and so maketh One to differ from another , that nothing at all of these Kinds of Gifts depends in any Measure upon the Will of the Persons themselves . And therefore, as by having these Gifts , no Man was the better Christian ; so no Man by wanting them , was the worse ; these Gifts being bestowed, not for the Benefit of the Persons themselves, but for the Conversion of Others . Again,

Other Gifts of the Spirit , are particular powers and Qualifications for particular Offices ; Of which the Apostle speaks thus, " To every one of us is given Grace , " (or a Gift,) " according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ , who gave some Apostles , and some Prophets , and some Evangelists , and some Pastors

Pastors & Teachers ; for the perfecting of the Saints ;
for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the
Body of Christ." And, with Respect to These, the
Goodness of a Christian did not consist in his having
This or That particular Gift, but in making a right
Use of his Talent , whatever it was . It was "God
that dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith ;" (i.e)
God , according to his own good Pleasure , distri-
buted to each one a particular Trust or Employ-
ment ; which , in this Place , is the Meaning of the
" Measure of Faith ;" It is a Trust committed to
each one's Fidelity or Faithfulness.

" Having, therefore , Gifts differing according to
the Grace that is given to us ; whether it be Prophe-
cying, let us prophecy according to the Proportion
of Faith ;" (that is , according to the Proportion of
the Gift entrusted to our Fidelity ; far so the Words
properly signify ;) " Or if it be Ministry , let us
wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth, on
teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation He
that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity , " (that is,
liberally ;) he that ruleth, with Diligence ; he that
showeth Mercy, with Cheerfulness ." Again,

Other Gifts of the Spirit, are particular and per-
sonal Advantageous Circumstances in the peculiar
Constitution of Men's Bodies, the natural Frame &

Temper

Temper of their Mind, or their external State of Life & Condition in the World; by which they are peculiarly fitted for the Exercise of some particular Offices, or for the continuing in some particular Manner and Course of Life. Of These the Apostle speaks " I would, (says he,) that all Men were even as I myself; But every Man hath his proper Gift of God," (a natural Qualification or Fitness for certain particular Duties or States of Life,) "one after This Manner, & another after That." And, with respect to These, the Goodness of a Christian does not consist in his being indued with This or That particular Qualification; but in his behav'g himself SUITABLY to These Qualifications wherewith God has indued him.

LASTLY, Other, (and indeed the Principal,) Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit, are moral Virtues; Righteousness, Peace, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, and the like. And in These lies the only Difficulty of the Question. If they be Fruits of the Spirit, & worked in us by the Power of the Grace of God; how then can it be objected to any Man as a Fault or as a Defect in himself, that he has not Thus received the Holy Ghost. The True Answer is; that these moral Graces, are not, like those others before-mentioned worked on Men necessarily, by an

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EXTERNAL Operation, but depend on the Endeavours of their own Will, at the same Time that they are promoted by the Assistance of the Holy Spirit. Every Person that embraces the Gospel and is baptized, has received the Promise of the Holy Ghost; and 'tis wholly his own Fault, and his own Wickedness only, if, with That Assistance, he brings not forth the Fruits of the Spirit. The Assistance of the Spirit, is indeed necessary to inable Men to bring forth Fruits meet for the Kingdom of God; But then, because 'tis the Assistance only, and not, (like the miraculous Operations,) the entire Work of the Spirit; and because That Assistance is always afforded Men in Proportion to the sincere Endeavours of their own Will co-operating; therefore, 'tis justly charged upon a Man as his own Fault, if he wants those Virtues and Graces of the Spirit, which, were it not for his own wilful rejecting its good Motions, the good Spirit of God would never be wanting in assisting him to practise. "Examine yourselves, (saith St. Paul,) whether ye be in the Faith: Prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you," (or, as it is elsewhere expressed, the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you,) "except ye be reprobate," (i.e.) except by your own perverse Wickedness ye drive him

him from you; And for this Reason doubtless it is, that whereas the ~~Miraculous Operations~~ are generally in Scripture styled the ~~Gifts~~ of the Spirit; the moral Virtues are on the contrary called, not the ~~Gifts~~, but much more usually the ~~Fruits~~ of the Spirit. ~~Fruits~~; to the Production of which, it is as necessarily requisite, that there be good Ground in which the root is planted; as that the Root it self be good, which is planted in that Ground. 'Tis as necessary in Order to bringing-forth the ~~Fruits~~ of the Spirit, that the Will and good Disposition of the Person himself, concur with the good Motions of the Spirit; as 'tis necessary that the Spirit affords his Assistance, to enable the Person effectually to fulfill his own good Dispositions. Our Saviour has illustrated This to us, in the Parable of the Sower; where the Fruit, brought-forth in several Places, is represented exactly proportionable to the Goodness of the Ground. The Seed sown, is the Word of God; and the Rain which caused it to grow, is the Assistance of the divine Spirit. Now though without Seed sown in the Earth, and without Rain from Heaven, no Fruit indeed could have been produced; yet to the Badness of the Ground only, is all the Failure justly ascribed in this Parable by our Lord, because the other Necessaries were supplied from a-

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bove. In like Manner, though Christian Virtues are indeed the Fruits of the Spirit, and could not, without the Assistance of the divine Spirit, be acceptable and effectually produced; yet because This Assistance from above is never wanting but thro' our own Unworthiness, therefore, most justly is every wicked Person blamed and punished, for being void of those Virtues, which are the Fruits of the Spirit. The same thing is expressed to us in the Parable of the Vine-yard, where God complains by the Prophet concerning the People of the Jews whom he compares to a Vine-Yard, that he had "fenced it, and gathered out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine; & he looked that it should bring forth Grapes, and it brought forth Wild-Grapes." The planting and dressing the Vineyard was necessary to its bringing forth good Grapes; but when it failed to do so, the Fault was in the Vineyard itself, "What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes;" God does, on his Part, always what is necessary for our Assistance; and no more denies his Holy Spirit to such as worthily ask him, than a tender Father, "if his Son asks an Egg, will give him a Scorpion,"

But

confessed upon all Men.

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But Men by their own Unworthiness, and resisting his good Motions, do quench, and grieve, and drive him from them ; and there is it most justly charged upon them, as their own Fault, if they have not in them the Spirit of God, which yet at the same Time is God's free Gift when bestowed at all. Free; because originally God was under no Obligation, but what his own mere Goodness lay upon him, to confer it on any : and yet nevertheless it is every Man's own Fault, if he receives it not; because God never with-holds this his free Gift, but from Those only who are not sincerely willing to co-operate with it, in bringing forth those Fruits of Righteousness and true Holiness, which, upon the Account of that Concurrence, are, at the same Time, both the VIRTUES of the MAN, & the FRUITS of the SPIRIT.

When therefore the Scripture affirms that " we are justified freely by his Grace ;" the Meaning is not, that the Grace of God operates upon Men as Machines ; and that he so acts upon them, as to make needless their acting for Themselves . But the Intention of the Phrase is to declare, that it is owing to the free Grace, or undeserved Favour of God, made known in the Gospel ; that the imperfect Fruits of Righteousness, which by our best Endeavours we are able to bring forth, are accepted of him.

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him unto Justification; and that the Assistance of the good Spirit of God is always at Hand, to strengthen & enable us to bring-forth those Fruits: just as when our Saviour declares, that "the Wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the Sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth;" and that "so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" the Meaning is not, that the Spirit regenerates Men without any Care or Co-operation of their own; (for That would make all the Exhortations of the Gospel vain and absurd;) but the Intent of the Passage is, that the Manner and Degrees, by which the Grace of the Gospel enables a Man to reform the whole moral Frame and Temper of his Mind, are as imperceptible to Sense, as the secret Causes of many great Effects & Operations in Nature.

That Regeneration is owing to the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, our Saviour plainly shows in this Argument, both by the Similitude itself, and by expressly calling it our being "born of the Spirit;" Yet, that at the same Time it depends upon the Man's own Will, whether that Divine Assistance shall take Effect in him; He no less plainly declares in the same Discourse, by requiring of us as an indispensable Duty, that we be born of the Spirit:

"Except

"Except a Man , (saith he,) be born of Water and of the Spirit , he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." From hence we may understand, that usually in Scripture-Phrase , both all the Good that Men do is ascribed to God , and all the Good that God works in them is still nevertheless ascribed to themselves , 'Tis God that "worketh in us both to will & to do of his good Pleasure ;" & yet in the very same Verse we are commanded so "work-out our own Salvation" ourselves ; indeed, we are commanded to do it for that very Reason, because God has given us the Power both of Witting and Performing it.

As "every Man is tempted , when he is drawn aside of his own Lust, and enticed ;" and yet at the same Time all Sin is ascribed to the Temptation of the Devil, because the Devil is the Head of Apostacy, and delights in the Sins of Men , and lays before them Opportunities of being enticed and drawn away by their own Lusts and Wickedness, without which he could otherwise have no Power over them ; so, because God is the original Author of all Good, & the Giver of all the Powers by which we do good, and encourages and assists us in the Performance of it ; therefore most justly in Scripture is all the Good we do, ascribed to Him ; and yet, because without our own Care and Concurrence to put them in Action, all these Powers and Abilities are in vain ; 'tis therefore

therefore very justly urged as a Duty incumbent upon Ourselves, to "grow in Grace," and it is required of us by an indispensable Obligation, that We bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit. - And this is implied to us in the very Form of Baptism: For when we are baptized in the Name of the Holy Ghost, we are baptized into the Expectation of the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, and into a solemn Promise of submitting ourselves accordingly to his holy Guidance and Direction. As, being baptized in the Name of the Father, is declaring our Assurance of Reconciliation and Return to his Favour, who had been justly offended with us; and a solemn Dedication of ourselves to His Service for the future, as the One supreme Governour & Lord of the Universe: And being baptized in the Name of the Son, is being baptized into the Remission of Sins by his Blood, and into a solemn Obligation, on our own part, of dying with him unto Sin, and rising again unto Newness of Life: So, being baptized in the Name of the Holy Ghost, is at the same time a solemn Declaration both of our Hoping for his Guidance, and of our Resolving to obey it. But,

Lastly, The last general Head was, to see what Returns we are bound to make for the Benefit of those Divine Gifts bestowed upon us. And,

First,

First, It will become us to return continual and hearty Thanks to God, as the original Author and Fountain of all Good; because it is He, who has thus given unto us his Holy Spirit, and who has "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts."

Secondly, As we are to return hearty Thanks for the Gifts already received, by improving them to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of ourselves; so we are continually to pray to God, in the whole Course of our Lives, that This his Holy Spirit, into whose Name we were at first baptized, (i.e.) dedicated wholly to his Guidance & Direction in the Work of our Salvation, may never be withdrawn from us; but may continue to guide us by his perpetual Influence, Communion and Fellowship. Again,

With Regard to the Holy Ghost himself, it becomes us to endeavour to frame right and worthy Notions concerning him; that we acknowledge him to be the Inspiter of the Prophets and Apostles; the Author and Worker of all Signs and Miracles; the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the Distributer of all spiritual Gifts: that we believe & receive his Testimony, as delivered by the inspired Writers; that we obey his good Motions; be solicitous to obtain his Gifts and Graces; and infinitely careful not to

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"grieve

"grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed (A) unto the Day of Redemption," lest we be found to do Despite unto the Spirit of Grace; which in Scripture is represented as a more unpardonable Fault, than offending against the Person even of our Saviour himself.

Upon the Whole, Altho it appear that the Holy Ghost is God, as well as the Father, and the Son; altho' "we are compelled, by the Christian Verity, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord, yet are we strictly forbidden, by the Catholic Religion, to say there be three Gods, or three Lords."

As therefore, the Doctrine of an Unity in the Godhead is most clear and peremptory, we are to

V. (A) The Word, *sealed*, is a figurative Expression, the Meaning of which may be understood from Rev. "Hurt not the Earth, -- till we have sealed the Servants of our God in their Fore-heads," (i.e.) distinguished them by a peculiar Mark, in Order to preserve them from a general Destruction. In Allusion to which, good Christians are said to "be sealed by the Spirit unto the Day of Redemption;" (i.e.) distinguished by the Fruits of the Spirit, in Order to be delivered from the Wrath to come. And in Pursuance of this Figure, is the like Expression, "who hath also sealed us, and given the *Earnest*," (in the Original it is, the *Pledge or Token*,) "of the Spirit in our Hearts;" And again, "The Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his," and "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity."

essive of the Three Persons, (being of the same Nature, Substance (a) and Authority,) so united, that the whole TRIAD constitute but One God.

"How can these Things be?" is a Question that will then only be resolved, when this Mist of Flesh, & its Frailties, shall be taken from before our Eyes, when "we shall see Face to Face, and know even as we are known." (a) Suffice it for the present, that the Doctrine comes attended with such Evidence

(A) "From this great Arian Serpent sprang two Vipers, who taught that the Substance of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, were distinct and different from each other; but We have received, been instructed in, and therefore hold, and maintain that Catholic and Apostolic Tradition, Faith and Confession, that the Substance of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is One and the same."

The Declaration of the Orthodox Bishops, against the Arians, under Constantine the Younger. The Synod was held at Sardica, the Metropolis of Dacia, the Beginning of the fourth Century: there were present 250 Bishops.

(B) It is a vain Attempt of the School-Men to undertake to give Reason for these Things; All their Subtilties can have no Foundation, and consequently signify nothing towards clearing this Matter, which is rather darkened, than cleared, by a pretended Illustration.

In Fact, as we should never have believed this Mystery if the scripture had not revealed it, so we understand nothing concerning it, besides what is contained in the Scriptures: and therefore, if in any thing, you must think soberly upon these Subjects.

dence, as, (notwithstanding all its Mysteriousness,) we cannot fairly, or safely reject.

There is one thing more, upon the Doctrine of the general Influence of the Spirit upon us, which deserves particular Observation, with which I shall conclude, [viz] That following the Guidance of the Spirit, is, not following Enthusiastick Imaginations; but taking Care to obey the Doctrine which the Spirit inspired.

The Apostles were directed by a miraculous Assistance of the Spirit, upon every particular Occasion: but we have Now no Promise of any such miraculous Direction: Obeying the Spirit Now, is nothing else but obeying his Dictates, as set down in the inspired Writings: And to enable us to do This, we MAY, upon our sincere Endeavours, expect His continual Blessing and Assistance. (A)

(A) See the Influence and Operations of the Holy Spirit, in the Discourse for Whitsunday, in this Work.

Sermon

SERMON LXIII.

Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Matt. xii. 31, 32. "All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men : but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men. And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come."

Having already spoken of the Personality of the Holy Ghost, his real Existence & Divinity ; we may now not unaptly speak of the Blasphemy here mentioned as committed against him, which will never be forgiven : And this we the rather undertake, because it is a Matter which hath been much controverted, tho' not always rightly understood.

In speaking, therefore, to this Subject, I shall,

First, Enlarge somewhat on the Descent and Gift of the Holy Ghost, and the Occasion upon which these

these Words were spoken. By which will appear,

II. The real Ground and Nature of the Sin before us.—I shall then,

III. Show the Heinousness of it. And,

Lastly, The Sins nearly approaching it, that we may guard against them. And,

First, The Gift of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles at first, was the greatest and most important, that was ever sent down from Heaven upon the Sons of Men; the Gift of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost; that plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit, which was the Accomplishment both of the Predictions of all the antient Prophets, and of all the latter Promises made by our Saviour to his Disciples; that Gift of Tongues, which was so peculiarly proper and necessary a Means to the great End for which it was designed, and the Effects whereof have been of such universal Extent over the Face of the whole Earth.

The Gospel of Christ, was not, like the Religion of Moses, to be confined to One Nation or People; but to be preached, as the general Doctrine of Salvation, to all Mankind: And the Gift of Tongues, with which the first Preachers of it were indued, was equally both a necessary Means to inable them

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to preach to all Nations; and a strong Proof of the Truth of that Doctrine which they were so miraculously enabled to spread. It was a necessary Means, without which the Gospel could by no Labour whatsoever; nor by the most indefatigable Industry, in compassing Sea Land to make a Proselyte; have in the Course of many Ages been propagated thro' so many different and remote Countries, as by this Means it was spread in the Space of but a short Time: In Fact, at the very instant of its first Emission, "Men, out of every Nation under Heaven," were brought acquainted with "the wonderful Works of God," By Means of the devout Jews at that Time dwelling at Jerusalem, "both Parthians, and Medes, and Elemites, and the Dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the Parts of Libya about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." And, at the same Time that it so SWIFTLY conveyed the Knowledge of the Gospel, it was likewise a strong Proof of the Truth of the Doctrine itself, both upon Account of the Greatness of the Miracle in its own Nature, and the Clearness of the Evidence wherewith the Miracle was set-forth.

The Greatness of the Miracle in its own Nature,
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consisted

consisted in This; that it was worked upon MANY Persons, at one and the same Time; that it was producing in them such an Effect, as was equivalent to the Result of a long Habit; and that it was not a short and transitory Effect, but of a permanent Duration; and, in its whole Continuance, equally miraculous, as in its first Operation. Upon the Whole, therefore, it was such a Miracle in all its Circumstances, as there had been no Example of any like it before; and probably referred-to by our Saviour, where he promiseth that, "He that believeth on Me; the Works that I do, shall he do also; and greater Works than these shall he do." And,

The Clearness of the Evidence wherewith the Miracle was set forth, consisted in This; that Matters were so disposed by the Wisdom of Providence, that the greatest Enemies of the Apostles, did themselves, by their own Testimony, remove the only Objection that could be brought against it. For, all that could possibly be alledged against the Truth of the Miracle, was, either that the New Tongues with which the Apostles began to speak, were NOT REAL Languages; or, if they were, that then the Apostles, who spake them, had STUDIED and BEEN TAUGHT those Languages before. But now,

The former of these Suspicions was removed by

the Strangers then present ; and the latter was taken-off by the Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves. The Strangers then present, who understood the Languages, took-off that foolish Objection, that the Apostles were "full of new Wine's" for they heard & understood "them speaking in their own Tongues, the wonderful Works of God." And,

The Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves, removed the Other Suspicion, that of their having been TAUGHT the Languages ; for they knew them to be illiterate Men , and said , " Are not all these, that speak , Gallileans ?" just as they had formerly said concerning Jesus himself ; " How knoweth this Man Letters , having never learned ?" And , " Whence hath this Man these things ?" , &c.

Both the Strangers therefore, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves , bore Testimony to the Truth of the Miracle , even at the same Time, and with the same Arguments by which they opposed it ; And were of all others, the best & most competent Witnesses, for that very Reason , because they were prejudiced against the Thing , and Enemies to the Men . Beside all which ; The Miracle itself (as already observed,) was permanent in its Continuance , as well as publick in the Manner of its being wrought . If it had been the Effect of " new Wine ,

ie would have gone-off when that Effect ceased, and being moreover publick, it had Witnesses closely to examine it. So that in all Respects, it was both the Greatest in the Nature of the Thing itself, and the Clearest in the Evidence of its being really performed; that can possibly be imagined.

To Us indeed, who live at this Distance of Time, the Evidence of a Fact done so many Ages since, cannot be so perfectly and entirely clear, as to those who were themselves Eye-Witnesses of it, & heard it. But if there are Matters of Fact so attested, even at much greater Distances of Time, as that no reasonable Person can in the least question the Truth of them; and This, of all Other distant Facts that are recorded in any History, has the greatest and most remarkable Attestations; the Evidence of it even to Us, can with as little Reason be rejected; as that which was offered to those very Persons who lived at the Time. Indeed, in some Respects, we may seem to have the Advantage over them, in Point of Certainty of our not being deceived. For, besides that we are Now free, from many of those inveterate Prejudices, which both Jews & Gentiles then labour'd under; & which we cannot assure ourselves we should have less obstinately adher'd to, than They did; We have moreover, what They at that

Time could not have ; We have the concurrent Examination of many Ages, and the Advantage of considering and comparing the Objections of Adversaries, on all Sides ; We have the additional Proofs, arising from the continued Effects of this miraculous Power, in different Times & Places ; We have seen the Truth of the Apostles' Doctrine confirmed, by the Accomplishment of several Prophecies ; by the Destruction of Jerusalem ; by the final scattering of the whole Nation of the Jews ; & by the incredible Success, and universal Propagation, of the Gospel, over all the World.. Now,

These additional Confirmations, of the Truth of the Doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost in the Revelation of the Gospel, are to Us ; (what the Strength of the Evidence arising from the Nearness of the Time, was to them who liv'd in the first Ages;) a proportionable Aggravation of the Guilt of Unbelief, in those who, notwithstanding all reasonable Proof, yet obstinately reject the Counsel of God against Themselves, by disbelieving or, (which is the same thing,) disobeying the Gospel! For the Sin of Unbelief, does not consist in not believing what Men have no sufficient Reason to believe ; but in refusing to attend to reasonable Evidence, in being unwilling to examine into a Doctrine, which would oblige them

them to amend their Lives ; in " hating the Light and fearing to come into it, lest their Deeds should be reproved."

Upon this Account it is , that Knowledge, or (which is all one,) the Means of Knowledge fairly proposed to Men, is the great Aggravation of the Sin of Unbelief ; shewing plainly, that in such Case nothing but Obstinacy and the Love of Sin , is the real Cause of their rejecting the Truth : Upon this Account it is, that our Saviour thus declares concerning the Jews, " If he had not come, and spake unto them, they had not had Sin ; but now they have no Cloke for their Sin." And to the Cities, " wherein most of his mighty Works were done, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for them." And,

Upon the same Ground it is , that the Apostle in like Manner so highly aggravates the Sin of rejecting of the Gospel, " For if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on Earth ; much more shall not we escape, if we turn-away from him that speaketh from Heaven." And " If the Word spoken by Angels, was stedfast ; and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward ; How shall we escape , if we neglect so great Salvation , which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord,

Lord; & was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness, with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will."

A careful Consideration of the Sense of these Passages, will lead us to the true Meaning of the like, but more difficult, and seemingly more severe Expressions in the Text. For, if the great Aggravation of Sin, be the Knowledge of our Duty; and "the Condemnation of the World, be the Light that is come into it;" and the Guilt of the Jews was proportionably greater than that of other Men, for This Reason, because our Saviour "did among them the Works which no other Man did;" And those particular Cities of the Jews, wherein most of our Lord's "mighty Works were done," were condemned with a more particularly severe Judgment; and in general, "every Sin against the Word spoken by our Lord himself from Heaven, and confirmed with Signs and Wonders following, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, can less expect to escape unpunished, than those committed against the Law given by Angels and delivered by Moses upon Earth: It follows, that if there be Any Sin, more heinous than All others; if there be Any Guile, which in Evans will terminate Serm. LXIII.

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in final Perdition ; if there be any Crime, of which it may before-hand be judged that it will never be expiated ; it must be Men's obstinately sinning against That Light, a greater and clearer than which, will never be afforded them ; it must be Men's hardning themselves in such a Disposition, as in the Nature of the thing cuts-off from itself the Means of Recovery ; it must be such a Corruption and Depravity of Mind, as, like a Mortal and incurable Disease, precludes all Methods of applying a Remedy. And This, it is evident, cannot be any particular Sin, but a general and total Rejection of the only Means of recovering from Sin.

The Generation that lived at the Time of the Flood, sinned unpardonably ; not by any of the particular Crimes they were guilty of ; but by rejecting the preaching of Righteous Noah, which was the last Call God vouchsafed them to Repentance ; For he resolved, that whosoever blasphemed the preaching of Noah, should never be forgiven, but be destroyed by the Flood. The Inhabitants of Sodom sinned unpardonably ; not by any of their particular Wickednesses, which yet were extremely heinous ; but by refusing to hear Lot's Exhortations to Repentance ; who was the last Monitor God intended to send them ; and he determined judicially, that

whoso-

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whosoever blasphemeth the preaching of Lot, it should never be forgiven him, but he should be destroyed in the Desolation by Fire. The Pharisees in our Saviour's Time, sinned likewise unpardonably; not by any of the particular Iniquities, with which they are charged in the Gospel; (for the whole Design of our Lord's Preaching, was to enjoin them to repent of these, that they may be forgiven;) But they sinn'd unpardonably, by opprobriously rejecting our Lord's Invitation to Repentance; and by scornfully reviling the greatest and last Miracles, which He intended to work in that Place amongst them; And therefore, after This, God resolved to leave them to themselves, to live and die in their Sins without further Conviction, and never to be forgiven, or to have any New Means of Pardon offered them, "either in this World, or in the World to come." "Verily I say unto you, All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto Men: And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this World, neither in the World to come."

The Words are the severest in the whole New
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in final Perdition ; if there be any Crime, of which it may before-hand be judged that it will never be expiated ; it must be Men's obstinately sinning against That Light, a greater and clearer than which, will never be afforded them ; it must be Men's hardning themselves in such a Disposition, as in the Nature of the thing cuts-off from itself the Means of Recovery ; it must be such a Corruption and Depravity of Mind, as, like a Mortal and incurable Disease, precludes all Methods of applying a Remedy. And This, it is evident, cannot be any particular Sin, but a general and total Rejection of the only Means of recovering from Sin.

The Generation that lived at the Time of the Flood, sinned unpardonably ; not by any of the particular Crimes they were guilty of ; but by rejecting the preaching of Righteous Noah, which was the last Call God vouchsafed them to Repentance ; For he resolved, that whosoever blasphemed the preaching of Noah, should never be forgiven, but be destroyed by the Flood. The Inhabitants of Sodom sinned unpardonably ; not by any of their particular Wickednesses, which yet were extremely heinous ; but by refusing to hear Lot's Exhortations to Repentance ; who was the last Monitor God intended to send them ; and he determined judicially, that

whoso-

The Holy Ghost.

whoever blasphemeth the preaching of me, it should never be forgiven him, but he should be cast
forever into Desolation by Fire. The Pharisees in
our Saviour's Time, sinned likewise unpardonably,
and by any of the particular Iniquities, with which
they are charged in the Gospel; (for the whole Design
of our Lord's Preaching, was to entice them
to repent of these, that they may be forgiven;) But
they sinn'd unpardonably, by opprobriously rejecting
our Lord's Invitation to Repentance; and by scorn-
fully reviling the greatest and last Miracles, which
He intended to work in that Place amongst them;
And therefore, after This, God resolved to leave
them to themselves, to live and die in their Sins
without further Conviction, and never to be for-
given, or to have any New Means of Pardon offered
them, "either in this World, or in the World to
come." "Verily I say unto you, All Manner of Sin
and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but
the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not
be forgiven unto Men: And whosoever speaketh a
Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven
him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy
Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this
World, neither in the World to come."

The Words are the severest in the whole New
Testament.

Testament ; & therefore, ought to be carefully considered & explained , in their true & proper Meaning ; that neither melancholy pious Persons may, (on the one Hand,) be terrified with Fears of what they have not the least Reason to apply to themselves ; nor, (on the other Hand,) wilful and incorrigible Sinners , presumptuously imagine themselves to be in less Danger than they really are.

The Occasion of the Words, was This. Our Saviour having cast out a Devil, & healed the diseased Person, so that he who had been dumb and blind, immediately both spake and saw ; the People , astonished at the Greatness of the Miracle, began to express their Opinion, that he must needs be the Messias, — Upon which , the Scribes & Pharisees who came from Jerusalem, and observed what was done, very maliciously attributed that great Miracle, which our Lord had wrought by the Spirit of God, to the Assistance of the Devil. “ This Fellow,” said they, (Speaking in Contempt of him,) “ doth not cast out Devils , but by Beelzebub , the Prince of the Devils.”

To This our Saviour replies ; Whatever is done by Confederacy with Evil Spirits , must have something that promotes the Interest of the Kingdom of Satan, and not any thing directly contrary to it; un-

less a Kingdom can be supported by Divisions within itself, — “ Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation ; and every City or House divided against itself, shall not stand.”

After this, he resorts their own Calumny upon them, in Order to manifest their grievous Partiality and Self-Condemnation : “ If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children” (your own Friends, the Exorcists,) “ cast them out ? ” If they cast out Devils by the Help of God, calling on the God of Abraham ; why am I, who do the same things, and greater, in the Name of the same God, charged with doing them by the Help of the Devil ? — If the thing itself be apparent ; and ye cannot without extreme Unreasonableness and the utmost Degree of Malice, deny it, that what I do, is by the immediate Power of God ; then here is a convincing Proof offered you, that I am truly sent from God, and that the Doctrine I preach is for the Establishment of his Kingdom ; “ If I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then no doubt the Kingdom of God is come unto you.”

He then goes on to a further Consideration, drawn from the Nature of his Doctrine, and from the whole Tenor of his Life and Conduct, as being directly opposite to the Devil’s Interests, and plainly shewing,

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Chewing, that he was so far from being a Confederate with Beelzebub, that he was his most avowed and formidable Enemy; binding that strong Prince in Chains, rifling his House, and spoiling his Goods.

The Connexion of the following Words, is more difficult to be understood; for they may seem at first Sight to be abrupt, and independent on what went before; "He that is not with me, is against me; & he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." But the True Intent of them, is, to illustrate and confirm what went before, in some such Manner as This: - When two great Powers are at open and irreconcileable Enmity against each other, even he who only FORBEARS joining with one side, is thereupon reputed to be against it; according to the usual Proverb, "He that is not with me, is against me;" How much more therefore, (infers our Saviour,) ought ye to believe that I, who have actually done so much towards destroying the Power and Kingdom of the Devil, am really and in Truth acting in Opposition against him, and not by Confederacy with him! And then he adds in the Words before us; "Wherefore I say unto you, All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto Men." The Meaning is,

Since

Since 'tis abundantly as 'tis possible for any thing to be, that the Works which I do, are by the immediate Authority of God, and by the Power of His Holy Spirit; Therefore whosoever shall resist this great Conviction, by so unreasonable and obstinate a Degree of Malice, as to ascribe these very Works; these greatest and highest Evidences of Divine Authority, to the Power of the Devil; To such a Person God will never afford any further Means of Conviction: And therefore tho' all other Blasphemies and all particular Sins whatsoever, may be repented of, and forgiven; yet He who is guilty of this TOTAL Corruption of Mind, this maliciously perverse and desperate Rejecting of the greatest and highest Conviction that God vouchsafes to afford Men; shall never have granted him any further Means of Repentance and Forgiveness. Every particular Kind, or Sort of Sin whatsoever, & all other Blasphemies whatsoever, shall be forgiven Men: Even he that speaks against Me, (says our Lord,) in all other Respects; or calumniates me, upon any other Account whatever, & is not at first convinced by my Preaching and Exhortations; may yet afterwards be converted by the mighty Works he shall see, & by the Power of the Holy Ghost; & so repent and be forgiven: But he who obstinately resists even this greatest

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greatest & most extraordinary Method, which God has thought fit to make-use of, for the Conversion of Mankind; and maliciously reviles the most evident Operations of the Spirit of God; such a One has no further Means left, by which he might be convinced and brought to Repentance; and consequently he can never be forgiven. "Whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come."

Sermon

SERMON LXIV.

On the same Subject.

Matt. xii. 31, 32. "All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men: but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men. And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come."

The Connection and general Meaning of these Words being already explained, we shall now,

II. Proceed to the real Nature and Ground of the Sin here expressed. And First,

There may be, and there have been, several Offences committed against the Holy Ghost, which yet do not amount to the Blasphemy against him specified in the Text: such as: "grieving the Holy Spirit," - and "quenching him," (i.e.) when Men refuse to hearken to his Counsels, to follow his Motions

Motions, or to obey his Calls. But this is not Blaspheming him. We may also "resist the Holy Ghost," which is Opposing him with an high Hand, and Rebelling against him, and is a very heinous Sin; yet this is not the same with blaspheming and slandering him.

Ananias and Sapphira grievously affronted the Holy Ghost in telling him a Lie, either presuming upon his Ignorance, as not knowing it; or upon his Patience, as if he should have connived at it: but yet this was not so bad as what the Pharisees did in ascribing his works to the Devil. The malicious telling a Lie of him, to defame and slander him, was a more heinous Offence than telling a Lie to him, under a weak and foolish Persuasion. Again,

Upon the Day of Pentecost, when the Disciples, full of the Holy Ghost, began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance, there were some standing-by, who, mocking, said, "These Men are full of New Wine" vilifying the Operations of the Spirit, as the Effects of Drunkenness: but the Men who said it, said it perhaps wantonly or ignorantly, rather than spitefully. They might not know that the Disciples really spake with other Tongues: but being unacquainted themselves with the Languages then spoken, they took them all to

be fangoh, such as Men might utter under some Dis-order of Mind, beguiled either by Wine, or by Enmity ; and so they accounted, (as they thought,) for the thing in a natural Way, not suspecting any thing SUPERNATURAL in it. But the Pharisees, who were charged with being guilty of Blaspheming the Holy Ghost, they very well knew that what they had seen done, could not be accounted for in a natural Way ; and yet such was their Enmity against the Gospel, that they chose rather to impute the Miracles of our Lord to the Devil, than to acknowledge the Divine Hand which was so visible in them, that they themselves could not but see it, had they been at all disposed to it.

We may here also mention Simon Magus, as a Person who very highly affronted the Holy Ghost, when he offered Money for the purchasing his miraculous Gifts. But neither was That any such direct Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as what the Text mentions : for he had some Respect and Veneration for the Miracles he saw wrought, and for the Author of them, and was very far from imputing them to the Assistance of the Devil.

The Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was something worse than any of these : It was defaming the Holy Spirit of God, and God himself, under the ex-

cerable Name of Beelzebub; - It was reviling, and that knowingly and desperately, the divine Works as diabolical Operations. In This, (it is conceived,) & in This precisely, consisted that Blasphemy which shall never be forgiven. For First,

It is observable that our Saviour does not say, The Sin against the Holy Ghost, but the BLASPHEMY against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven.

Neither in This, nor in any other Passage of Scripture, is there any Mention of a SIN against the Holy Ghost.* For indeed our Saviour is Not here speaking of a SIN, or of a particular ACT of SIN; But of a certain incurable MALICIOUS Disposition of Mind, which by venting itself under such peculiar Circumstances in Blasphemy against the GREATEST of our Lord's Miracles, plainly discovered itself to be incapable of Amendment, by any Means which God would vouchsafe to make-use of. And, it was not the particular ACT of Blaspheming, that itself rendered the Men unpardonable; But That particular Blasphemy, in Those particular Circumstances, was a SIGN only or an Evidence, which our Saviour knew to proceed from an INCURABLE, and therefore UNPARDONABLE malicious Disposition of Mind.

This is evident from the Words immediately following the Text, whose CONNEXION usually is not suffi-

*[¶]) Two some call it the Sin against the Holy Ghost; yet Scripture itself never calls it any thing else but Blasphemy; which is worth the observing. For, from thence we may be assured, that this Sin, (what-ever it may ought to be reckoned among the Lips of Speech, among the Offences of the Tongue.) — All the Sins which Men commit are reducible to three Heads, as being either in Thought, in Word, or in Deed; now, the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can properly be referred to the Second only of the three so mentioned; it lies in Words, is committed by speaking, and particularly by Evil-speaking; by reviling and defaming the Holy Spirit of God. In the Text, it is called "Speaking against the Holy Ghost;" and, by St. Mark, it appears, that the Sin consisted in something which the Pharisees said. For it is there remarked, as the Sum and Substance of the Guilt they

ciently taken Notice of. For thus, when our Saviour had declared the Pharisees Blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, to be unpardonable; he adds, as a Reason, in the very next Words, "Either make the Tree good, and his Fruit good; or else make the Tree corrupt, and his Fruit corrupt: For the Tree, (says he,) is known by his Fruit. O Generation of Vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh." It is evident, therefore, that not for the particular Act of Blasphemy; but for That incurably wicked Disposition of Mind, of which Blaspheming in those Circumstances was a plain Indication, were these Pharisees declared to be unpardonable. Nothing, therefore, can be gathered from this Passage, concerning any particular Sin against the Holy Ghost, (as Many have without Reason imagined,) in its own Nature unpardonable. For in Reality, All wilful Sin whatsoever is against the Holy Ghost; - against the good Motions, against the Guidance & Direction of the good Spirit of God; Yet not every, nor any wilful Sin is upon that Account absolutely unpardonable; as appears from the whole Tenor of Scripture: Much less are blasphemous Thoughts, which melancholy pious Persons are apt to complain of, and which therefore

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were chargeable with, that they said of Jesus , that " He hath an unclean Spirit." And it is further observable, that our blessed Lord , in the Close of his Discourse upon that Occasion, pronounces thus : " Every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof in the Day of Judgment." Idle Words here mean malicious or impious Expressions ; alluding still to the main Subject of his Discourse, the spiteful and opprobrious Words which the Pharisees had impiously thrown out against the Spirit of God. In a Word, The Sin, or Blasphemy, against the Holy Ghost , was the belying , slandering , or reviling, the divine Spirit, by which our Lord wrought his Miracles ; attributing them to the Devil.

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are not wilful at all; much less are ynearby blasphemous Thoughts, of This highest Malignity; when, generally speaking, they are not so much as chosen or wilful Sins at all. Even those wilful Sins against, or in Opposition to the Holy Ghost, (which yet is a Phrase never used in Scripture-Language,) are in the Gospel always supposed pardonable upon true Repentance.

The Blasphemy our Saviour here speaks of, is a thing of another Nature; It is not singly sinning against the Person of the Holy Ghost, or against his good Morions, but presumptuously Reviling the greatest Works of the Holy Ghost, and so obstinately Rejecting the last and solemnest Call to Repentance. Which is further evident from what our Saviour adds, that "he who speaks against the Son of Man," might be forgiven; As the Jews, who reviled him as "a Wine-Bibber and a Glutton, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners," might be forgiven if they repented upon the further Convictions that should afterward be afforded them: But he that blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, against the highest Evidence of our Lord's greatest Miracles, was asked to be forgiven: Not because even this was in itself, and in the Nature of the Thing, absolutely unpardonable; (For no Reason can be given

giving ^{any} speaking against the Person of the Holy Ghost, should be in itself of greater Malignity, than speaking against Christ, or against God, the Father Himself; but because it was an obstinate rejecting the last Means of Conviction, and an evident Token of incorrigible Malice.

Among the Ancient Jews, "He that despised Moses' Law, died without Mercy;" Our Saviour, in like Manner declares, that he who by Blaspheming against the Works of the Holy Spirit, despiseth and rejects the final Offer of the Gospel, he also shall perish without Mercy. And, This possibly may be the Meaning of the other Phrase; that such a malicious Temper should not be pardoned, "neither in this World, neither in the World to come," (i.e.) neither in that present Age, which was the Time of the LAW; nor in the Age to come, which is the Times of the MESSIAH.

Adly, It is reasonable to suppose, that this penitent Declaration of our Saviour, concerning the Impardonable Wickedness of those who thus blasphemously rejected the highest Evidence of the Gospel, ought to be applied and understood of Those Persons only, who themselves saw his Miracles, and rejected them purely out of a wicked Disposition; [viz.] the Pharisees, and unbelieving Jews. For, the

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those who live in After-Ages, and are not Eye-Witnesses of his mighty Works, have indeed nevertheless sufficient Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel; & in some few Respects, (as already observed,) have even the Advantage over the greater Part of those who lived at That Time; yet, These Advantages arising from Arguments of Abstract Reason, Consideration, and Inquiry; which work differently upon Men at different Times, and may prevail afterwards, upon more mature Consideration, over the same Person who at present rejects them; therefore, no Man's rejecting the Gospel Now, can be known or supposed to proceed from the like incurable Malignity, as the Blasphemy of those who, themselves, saw our Lord's Miracles.

3dly, It may yet further be conceived, not without Probability, that these severe Words of our Saviour, are applicable, not even so much as to ALL Those Pharisees, who saw and rejected his Miracles; but to those only, who saw THAT particular great Miracle recorded in This Chapter, and who reviled it with THAT particular malicious Blasphemy, of ascribing it to the Power of the Unclean Spirit. For so St. Mark intimates, by ^{an} Addition in the Words immediately following the Text. For, after reciting our Lord's dreadful Sentence against such as should

vixi. . . . blasphemem

blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, he adds, " because they said, he hath an unclean Spirit," What, is this but declaring in so many Words, that the reviling the Holy Spirit as an unclean Spirit, was, the Blasphemy our Lord spake of, and was then committed by those blaspheming Pharisees? Especially as we do not find that any Persons whatsoever were ever rejected from Baptism, & its reasonable to suppose, that many of the other Pharisees, who had seen, and perhaps also spoken against our Saviour's Miracles, might yet afterwards repent, be baptized, and obtain Forgiveness. But These, who blasphemed, in this particular Manner, he knew were incorrigible, and perhaps judicially also resolved that no further Means should be offered them.

Nevertheless, it must be owned, that many wise and good Men, both ancient and modern, have been of different Sentiments in this Article.

Some, (with St. Austin,) maintaining that all Sins are pardonable upon Repentance, have resolved the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, unpardonable Sin, into final Hardness and Impenitency: but final Impenitency is one thing, &c Blasphemy is another; and final Impenitency is an Error in a Man's whole Conduct; whereas the Blasphemy in the Text is one particular Crime, & committed by reviling

Sym. LXIV.

Words

Words (as already observed.) So that final Impenitency is Not the Sin signified : &, for the same Reasons, we may conclude, that a total & final Apostacy, which some take to be the Sin against the Holy Ghost, is very different from it, tho' it is certainly unpardonable as much, or perhaps more than the other.

Some, (with Origen and the Novatians of Old,) have imagined, that Sins committed after Baptism, are Sins against the Holy Ghost: but there is the same Objection, besides many more, against this Opinion, as against the two former, and it has very long and very deservedly been exploded by all sober Divines.

Some say, that every malicious resisting, or opposing the Gospel-Truths, when sufficiently propounded, is the Sin against the Holy Ghost: but Infidelity is One thing, and Blasphemy another: & the Sin which the Text censures, consists, more in reviling, than in resisting, as before observed: so that neither is this Account at all satisfactory.

There is One more which has been esteemed as highly plausible, and which has met with several very considerable Abettors. It is, that the holding-out obstinately against the LAST Dispensation, the Dispensation of the Spirit, commencing after Christ's Ascension,

blasphemy, was that Sin against the Holy Ghost. They who maintain this, are obliged also to maintain, that the Scribes and Pharisees, who attributed our Lord's Miracles to the Devil, were not then, & thence guilty of the Sin against the Holy Ghost. They plead that those blaspheming Pharisees were not yet excepted out of the general Pardon offered to as many as would repent and believe, but that our Lord himself prayed for their Forgiveness upon the Cross, which shows that they were yet capable of Pardon. They further add, that the Holy Ghost was not yet given till our Lord ascended, and therefore could not, (properly speaking,) be blasphemed before that Time: - and that the blaspheming and resisting him then, being holding-out against the very greatest Miracles, the strongest Proofs, and the last Remedies; this of Course must be the most sinful and provoking Obstinacy that could be, and on that Account is pronounced, unpardonable.

These Reasons are specious: but then here is no Account given how it comes to pass, that neither in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in any of the Epistles, is there a Word said by Way of Reproof, or of Caution against Blaspheming against the Holy Ghost; which if there had been any such thing, as any OTHER sin against the Holy Ghost, which Christians in After-

Times could be in Danger of falling into ; it can not be imagined, but the Apostles in their Epistles, wherein they are diligent to caution Men against all OTHER Crimes, would have been much fuller and more pressing in their Warnings to take-heed of THIS as being of more desperate Consequence than any OTHER whatsoever: Whereas, on the contrary, we find not in their Writings any direct Mention of any such Sin. Nor is there any other Mention made by our Saviour himself, but at a Time, when, (according to this Account,) no One was capable of committing it : & yet, by the Circumstances of our Lord's Discourse at THAT Time, we must reasonably conclude, that those blaspheming Pharisees were THEN verily guilty of the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

As to what is objected , that those very Pharisees were yet capable of Pardon, because our Lord upon the Cross prayed for their Forgiveness ; it may reasonably be said, (on the other Hand,) that those also who rejected the LAST Dispensation of the Holy Ghost were capable of Pardon : for St Stephen pray'd for the Forgiveness of his Murderers, tho he had before told them, that they had " resisted the Holy Ghost." This Objection therefore returns upon the Objectors , & equally affects their Interpretation of

the Sin against the Holy Ghost, or ours. Besides, The Objection goes upon the Supposition that the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is absolutely unpardonable, which indeed the Text seems to say; but yet good Critics have observed, that according to the Hebrew Idiom, the Words may, or rather must bear a softer Construction: importing only, that of all Kinds of Slander and Calumny, Slandering the Holy Ghost is most daring and impious; and that any other Calumnies will sooner meet with Pardon than That. But supposing the Sin to be absolutely unpardonable, then it must be said, that our Lord's praying for the Forgiveness of his Enemies upon the Cross, is to be understood only of his praying for the Jews in general, and not of his praying for those Persons in particular who had been guilty of the unpardonable Sin.

As to the other Objection, that the Holy Ghost could not be blasphemed at THAT Time because he was not yet given: it is of very little Weight. Our Blessed Lord most undoubtedly had the Holy Spirit always residing in him without Limitation or Measure; (John iii. 34.) he himself professes, that it was by the Spirit of God that he cast out Devils. So that the blaspheming that divine Power by which he wrought his Miracles, was plainly blaspheming the

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Holy Spirit. It is true that the Holy Ghost was not yet given in full Measure to our Lord's Disciples, but to our Lord himself he must certainly was, and therefore the Objection, in this Case, is flight, and comes not up to the Point. Upon the Whole then, We conclude as before, that the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was the imputing our Lord's Miracles to the Devil; and that That dreadful Sin was committed by those very Men who so reviled, slandered, and traduced that Divine Power by which he wrought them. I proceed therefore to consider,

III. The Heinousness of this Sin, which may be competently understood from what hath been already said,

It was a most wicked and impudent Lie and Slander upon the Holy Spirit, & was flying, as it were, in the Face of God. One would think, when God himself interposes, giving the divine Signal in plain uncontested Miracles, that it might become all Men to be mute, and to lay aside their otherwise unconquerable Rancour and Prejudice: but the Pharisees were so resolute and so outrageous in reviling every thing that gave any Countenance to Christ and his Gospel, that they would not spare even God himself, but called him Beelzebub, spitefully defaming his most divine Works, as being nothing else but diabolical

abolical Impostures. They saw the Miracles of our blessed Lord, and were very sensible that they were real & true Miracles; they knew also that they were wrought in direct Opposition to the Devil and his Kingdom, having all the fair Appearance possible of being Divine: nor would they have scrupled so have receiv'd them as Divine, had they been wrought by any One else, excepting Christ, or his Disciples; but such was their invenomed Hatred & Inveteracy against him and his, that, at all Adventures, contrary to all Candour or Equity, and in Contradiction to Reason and common Sense, they resolved to say however, scarce to believe, (for they hardly could be so stupid,) that he was in League with the Devil; and that all his mighty Works, which he wrought in the Name of God, were the Works only of Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils. There could not be a more insolent Slander, or a more provoking Outrage against the divine Majesty, than This was. All other Calumnies, against Men, or against Angels come short of This; for it was calumniating God himself, the tremendous and most adorable Deity; and was done very maliciously, and designedly to hinder and obstruct, as much as possible, the first planting of the Gospel, to the universal Hurt and Detriment of Mankind in general. In a Word, it

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was

was sacrificing the Honour of Almighty God, and both the present and future Happiness of Men, to their own private Humours and party Passions; being resolved to take-up with any wretched Civil, any improbable and self-contradictory Lies & Slanders against God, rather than permit the honest and well-meaning People to believe in Christ upon the brightest Evidence of his Miracles.

Such was the heinous Nature, & the transcendent Guilt of blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, in that Instance: and therefore it is, that our Blessed Lord took so particular Care, first, to confute the Calumny; and, next, to pass a most righteous, but dreadful Censure upon the Sin contained in it. The Divine Vengeance should pursue a Crime of that deep Die, both in this World, and in the World to come. The Offenders in that Kind, being unreclaimable and incurable, should, by the just Judgment of God, be sealed-up to everlasting Destruction; like Pharaoh, or like Judas, like Sodom or Gomorrah, ripe for Perdition, and fit to be delivered-over to everlasting Destruction.

Having thus largely considered what the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost means, and how heinous a Sin it was; It now only remains,

Lastly,

10 lastly, To inquire whether any Sins committed against the Divine Law are the same with it, and which of them come the nearest to it. And, 111 know said we but
111 First; For the Sake of the Over-tender and Cruel-
111 ous Conscience. It is observ'd that as regard, and
which some call BLASPHEMOUS Thoughts, which
rise-up accidentally, or as accidentally go-off again,
are, in no way, related to the Sin which is here
spoken of; which consisteth in the premeditated
Lies and Slanders against God, formed with a De-
sign to obstruct or darken the Evidences of the true
Religion, and to prevent others from looking into
them, or being convinced by them.

None but professed Atheists or Infidels can be
guilty of such professed Malice against the Gospel-
Salvation. No One, while he believes the Christian
Religion, and seriously professes himself a Member
of Christ's Church, can be guilty of the Blasphemy
against the Holy Ghost. — Nor scarcely,

2dly, Can even the Atheists or Infidels of these
Times come up to the same Degree of Guilt with
the Pharisees of Old; because they have not seen the
Miracles of Christ with their own Eyes. — It is some
Mitigation of their Sin, and makes their Infidelity
be more excusable that they have not, altogether,

Serm. LXIV.

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so strong and glaring Evidences of the Truth of Christianity, as those had who lived in the first Ages, and saw the wonderful Works of God.

Rational and historical Evidence may be as convincing as the Other, when duly considered : but, as it strikes not upon the Senses, it does not awaken the Attention, and alarm every Passion of the Soul, in such a Degree as the Other does.

For which Reason, the Unbelievers of our Times, tho' they are abandoned and profligate, yet are not, altogether, so blameable in the Opposition, they make to Christianity, as the Unbelievers of Old Time were. They may indeed, at this Day, attribute the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles, (which they read-of in credible History,) to the Devil, as the Pharisees of Old, did; which will be "blaspheming the Holy Ghost;" but it will not be exactly the same Sin; not the same in Degree, (tho' in Kind it may be,) because Circumstances, (as we see,) are different; and upon the Circumstances depend the heightening Aggravations. Nevertheless,

It must be said, that the obstinate rejecting the Miracles of our Lord, and of his Disciples, (which have been so fully attested,) and much more the detiding them, is a very high, and heinous Crime, as well as horrid Blasphemy; especially if committed in

in a Christian, &c; in a knowing Age, & where Men
have all the desirable Opportunities of learning the
Truth, as well as the strongest Motives offered, for
submitting to it.

Scoffers of THIS Kind come very little short of
the Pharisees of ancient Time, either in Malice,
Perverseness, Hardness of Heart, or in an impious
and desperate Defiance to God, and Christ, and to
the Holy Spirit of Both.

From such Blasphemy turn-away, and have no-
thing to do with the Tents of these wicked Men,
lest ye be consumed in their Iniquities. — Look
upon them as Vessels of divine Wrath, prepared for
Vengeance, — Sons of Perdition, fitted for Destru-
ction, which will either suddenly over-take them in
this World, or will fall the heavier upon them in
the World to come.

The Christian Religion has been so abundantly
proved and settled by great Variety of Evidences,
beyond every reasonable Exception, that all Gain-
sayers are now left without Excuse.

It has had the concurrent Testimony of Christ
and his Apostles, and both established by many and
great Miracles, unparalleled and uncontroled;
and, were ghere nothing else, its prevailing and
triumphing so much, so early, and so long, over

480 Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Jewish Superstition and Pagan Idolatry , is itself a Miracle as great as any, and manifestly shews , that the Act of God was in it, and that an Almighty Power hath fixt it.

What remains, therefore, but that we set a just Value upon this our most holy Profession ; evermore defending and maintaining it against all Opposers , and adorning it , (as it becomes us,) with Suitable Lives and Conversations.

Sermon

Book which is written by the hand of Man in England
SERMON against the heresies of the
Catholics, Peccatum peccati, &c. &c. &c.
will preferable appear to all others, and therefore
one man may be easily converted in it, if he be disposed
to do so, not to wth him, to do so, not to know the Reasons

On the Trinity.

John 5:20. "There are Three that bear Record
in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy
Ghost; these three are One." & 2 Cor 13:14. "Now I
thank God, that ye remember me.

It must be confessed, that by the W^m S^r and
Indiscr^{pt} of bus^y, (or at leas^t of well-meaning) People,
as well as by the Malice of those who are
Enemies to all revealed Religion, and are not con-
tent to profess their own Infidelity in Silence, with-
out communicating it to the Disturbance of Mankind;
the Doctrine of the Trinity hath suffered very
much, and made Christianity suffer with it. For
these two things must be granted: - first, that Men
of wicked Lives would be very glad there were no
Truth in Christianity at all; - and secondly, if they
can single out any one Article in the Christian Re-
ligion which appears not agreeable to their own,
corrupted Reason, or to the Arguments of those who
endeavour to seduce others, they presently conclude
that the Truth of the whole Gospel must sink so
long

long with it; which is just as wise as if a Man should say, because he dislikes the Law of his Country, he will therefore observe no Law at all: and yet that one Law may be very reasonable in itself, although he does not allow it, or does not know the Reason of the Lawgiver in it.

This is what hath happened with the great Doctrine of the Trinity; which Word is indeed not in Scripture, but was a Term of Art invented in the earliest Times to express the Doctrine by a single Word, for the Sake of Brevity and Convenience; yet these three are there Spoken of, with as much Distinction from one another, as we can speak of three several Persons; and it will be difficult to find a more convenient Word, whereby to express the Distinction of the three; for which Reason there is no just Cause to object against these Terms; so as we mean by them no more nor less, than what the Scripture says in other Words.

It deserves further to be considered, that there has been a very ancient Tradition, concerning three real Differences or Distinctions in the Divine Nature, nearly resembling the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. The Jews had this Notion; who distinguished the Word of God, and the holy Spirit of God, from him who was absolutely called God, whom

where they insisted on as the first Principle of all things, & so among the Heathens, PLATO, who probably had this Notion from the Jews, made three Distinctions in the Deity, by the Names of essential Goodness, Mind, & Spirit. So that what ever Objections this Matter may be liable to, neither the Jews nor Plato have Reason to object it to us Christians, especially since they pretend no other Grand Son; than either their own Reason, or ancient Tradition; whereas we Christians appeal to a divine Revelation for what we believe in this Matter, and which we believe singly on that Account. And it is very remarkable, that the Scriptures deliver this Doctrine of the Trinity without the least Doubt concerning the Unity of the divine Nature, and constantly assert, that "there is but one God." In those very Texts which mention these three Differences, the Unity of the divine Nature is expressly asserted; and there are Texts that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are One." Nor can a Plurality of Gods be inferred from this Mystery, as the same is delivered in Scripture, without making the Scripture grossly to contradict itself; & if either Councils, Fathers, or Schoolmen, have to explained this Mystery, as to give any just Ground of plausible Con-

four for such an inference, let the Blame fall where it is due, & not be charged on the holy Scriptures; but rather, " let God be true, & every Man a Liar."

The Doctrine, then, as delivered in holy Scripture, tho' not exactly in the former Words, is very short, and amounts only to this, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet that there is but one God. For, as to the Word Person, when we say these are three Persons, and as to those other Explanations in the Athanasian Creed, (whether compiled by Athanasius or no,) they were taken up three hundred Years after Christ, to expound this Doctrine; and the Occasion was this. About that Time there sprung up a Heresy of a People called Arians, from one Arius, the Leader of them. These denied our Saviour to be God, although they allowed all the rest of the Gospel; (wherein they were more sincere than their Followers among us.) Thus the Christian World was divided into two Parts, till at length, by the Zeal and Courage of St. Athanasius, the Arians were condemned in a general Council, and a Creed formed upon the true Faith, as St. Athanasius hath settled it.

But this Heresy after many Years again reviving in the World, and continuing ever since, no out of

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to them to France, but to give a loose to wickedness, by throwing off Religion? several Divines, in Order to answer the Devils or those adversaries to Freedom & Mortality, began to find out further Explanations of this Doctrine of the Trinity, by means of Philosophy; which have multiplied Controversies to such a Degree, as to baffle Scruples that have perplexed the Minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.

It must therefore be affirmed that the Method taken by many of those learned Men to defend the Doctrine of the Trinity, hath been founded upon a Mistake.

It must be allowed, that every Man is bound duty to follow the Rules and Directions of that Measure of Reason which God hath given him; and indeed he cannot do otherwise if he will be sincere, or act like a Man. For Instance: If I should be commanded by an Angel from Heaven, to believe it is Midnight at Noon-day, yet I could not believe him. So if I were directly told in Scripture, that THREE ARE ONE, and ONE IS THREE, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common Sense of that Expression, but must suppose that something dark or mystical was meant, which it pleased God to conceal from me and from all the

World. Thus in the Text, "there is the Three-fold bear Record," &c. Am I capable of knowing and defining what Union, and what Distinction there may be in the divine Nature, which possibly may be hid from the Angels themselves? To Against

I see it plainly declared in Scripture that there is but one God; and yet I find other Shadow claiming the Pre-rogative of God in knowing Men. Thoughts in saying, "he and his Father are one"; and, "before Abraham was, I am." I read, that the Disciples worshipped him; that Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God." And St. John, "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." - I read likewise that the Holy Ghost bestowed the Gift of Tongues, and the Power of working Miracles, which, if rightly considered, is as great a Miracle as any; that a number of illiterate Men should of a sudden be qualified to speak all the Languages then known in the World, such as could be done by the Inspiration of God alone! From these several Texts it is plain that God commands us to believe there is an Union, and yet a Distinction; but what that Union, or what that Distinction is, all Mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least till the Day of Judgment, without some new Revelation.

so difficult I cannot conceive the Nature of this Union and Distinction in the divine Nature, and therefore to reject them as absurd and impossible; as I would if any one told me that three Men are one, and one Man is three? We are told, that a Man and his Wife are one Flesh; this I can comprehend the Meaning of; yet, literally taken, it is a thing impossible! But the Apostle tells us, "We see now in Part, and we know not in Part;" and yet we would comprehend all the secret Ways & Workings of God. *1 Cor. 13:9.*

I shall therefore again repeat the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it is positively affirmed in Scripture; that God is there expressed in three different Names, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that each of these is God, and that there is but one God. But this Union and Distinction are a Mystery utterly unknown to Mankind.

This is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great Article; without ever inquiring any farther. And this can be contrary to no Man's Reason, although the Knowledge of it is hid from him.

Let it then be well considered, that there is a wide Difference between the nice Speculations of the Schools, beyond what is revealed concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, and what the Scripture only

teaches

teaches, and writes of this Mystery. For it cannot be denied but that the Schoolmen, who wrought great Part of Divinity out of their own Brains, have started a thousand Subtleties about this Mystery; such as no Christian need trouble his Head with much less to believe them. The Modesty of Christians is contented in divine Mysteries; to know what God hath revealed concerning them, without having the Curiosity of being "wise above what is written." They acknowledge, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, even as it is asserted in Scripture, is still a great Mystery, and so imperfectly revealed, as in a great Measure to be incomprehensible by human Reason. And therefore we dare not give particular Explication of this great Mystery by the Strength of Reason, knowing the Difficulty and Danger attending it. To show the Credibility of the thing, from the Authority of Scripture, without descending to a more particular Explication than Scripture hath given, will surely be enough; lest by endeavouring to clear the Difficulties already started, new ones should be raised, harder to be removed.

Firmly to believe what God hath thought fit to declare in this Matter is necessary for us, tho' we do not perfectly comprehend all. He hath revealed concerning it. For in such Cases an implicit Faith is

very

every distinguishable ; we mean , to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed , tho' we do not fully understand the Meaning of such Re-velations . Thus every Man who believes the holy Scriptures to be a divine Revelation , doth also im-plicitly believe the prophetical Books of Scripture , and several obscure Expressions in those Books , tho' he does not particularly understand the Meaning of all the Predictions & Expressions contained in them . And there are many good Christians that do not believe & comprehend the Mysteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a Scholarlike Judge of Controversies ; who yet doth they heartily maintain the Doctrines which are plainly revealed in Scripture , and live up to the plain Precepts of the Christian Religion , will , we doubt not , be approved of , by the great , just , and Infallible Judge of the World .

Let it be further considered ; that it is not re-pugnant to Reason , to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our Reason , provided we have sufficient Ground for the Belief of them : es-pecially as to what concerns God , whose Nature is incomprehensible , when he hath certainly revealed them . We need not wonder that these Differences in the Deity are incomprehensible , by our finite Un-

derstandings, when the divine Nature itself is, for
and yet the Belief of that is the Foundation of all
Religion.

There are many things in Nature which we can-
not comprehend how they are or can be; How little
do those who object against Mysteries, know of the
commonest Actions of Nature? The Growth of an
Animal, of a Plant, or of the smallest Seed, is a
Mystery to the wisest among Men. There are also
many things in Ourselves which we know not how
they are done and performed; as the vital Union of
Soull and Body. Who can imagine by what Means
a Spirit is so closely united to a material Body as
not to be parted without great Force and Violence
offered to Nature? The same may be said of our
several Faculties of Sense, and Imagination, of Mem-
ory, and Reason, and the Liberty of our Wills;
and yet we certainly find all these in ourselves, tho'
we cannot comprehend or explain the Manner in
which the several Operations of them are per-
formed; much less can we expect to comprehend the
infinite Nature and Perfection of God, who is cer-
tainly the greatest Mystery of all others, and whose
Nature and Manner of Existence are both incom-
prehensible by human Understanding. And the
Reason of this is evident, because God is INFINITE,

Author; Knowledge of his works; and yet no sooner
Manuscript brought him in good Reason to recall the
Being of God. Question: The future may be said
of God's certain Knowledge of future Contingencies
such, which depend on the uncertain Wills of free
Agents being utterly intoncitable; how any
Understanding can certainly foreknow what
which depend on another's free Will; and yet the
Scripture not only attributes this Fore-knowledge
to God, but gives us plain Instances of God's fore-
telling such things many Ages before it happened,
as could not come to pass but by the Sins of Men,
in which God can have no Hand, tho' he permits it.
Such was the memorable Event of the Death of
Christ, he who was by wicked Hands crucified and
slain; which is said to have happened accord-
ing to the determinate Fore-knowledge of God,
foretold by him many hundred Years before. Both
Scripture and natural Reason ascribe this Power and
Perfection to the divine Nature; and yet it would
puzzle the greatest Philosopher, to determine how
any Knowledge can intonably foresee an Event,
thro' uncertain Contingent Causes or Agents;
What is more intonable than how a Thing
should be of itself, without any Cause of its Being?
And yet our Reason compels us to acknowledge this,

because

because we certainly see that something is ; which either must have been of itself, without a Cause, or else something that we do not see, must have been of itself, and also made all other things. It is by this Reasoning we are forced to acknowledge a Deity, the Mind of Man being able to find no Rest but in the Acknowledgment of One eternal and wise Mind, as the first principal Cause of all other things; and this Principal is what Mankind, by general Consent, call God.

So that God hath laid a sure Foundation to set Knowledge his Being in the Reason of our Minds. And tho' it is extremely difficult to conceive how any thing can be of itself, yet Necessity obliges us to acknowledge it; and this once granted, our Reason, tired by trying other Ways, is forced to join with the general Apprehension and Belief of Mankind concerning a Deity.

Thus it appears by several Instances that it is not repugnant to Reason to believe the Existence of many things whereof we cannot give any particular and distinct Account ; much less is it contrary to Reason to believe what we are well assured God hath declared concerning himself, tho' it should be incomprehensible to our Reason. This is the present Case : we are sufficiently assured the Scriptures are

divine Metaphysic proved that this Mystery of the Trinity, is incomprehensible, that we cannot comprehend it, by natural Reason; nor to believe it, for this was done. Man ought to believe there is a God, by Nature, both necessarily & incomprehensible. But using Arguments from Natural Reason alone, & then is it God; and that he is incomprehensible, and so believe him, if you do not lessen our belief of his Being. In Next Manner, divine Revelation teaches us the Truth of this Doctrine of the Trinity, and if we do not comprehend by this latter Reason, following distinction is. that Man can distinctly what he sees, though it be something which he cannot comprehend. It ought then to satisfy us, that we have sufficient Evidence of this Doctrine being delivered in Scripture, free from contradiction, without pretending to comprehend what is infinite, or to know all the small Differences that are consistent with the Unity of an infinite Being. And for being unable to explain this Mystery, by any Similitude taken from finite Beings. — But, — Is it not thought, perhaps, strange, that God should require men to believe Mysteries, while he Reveal'd Manner of what we are to believe, is above our Comprehension, and shall be concealed from us; neither doth it appear at first sight, that

and every Christian Quarterly of every Part of it, to root out Sin and Wickedness; and to implant in his Church, the most perfect Purity and Righteousness. As to the prime Article of our Faith, a Belief in the Being and Existence of God, and his adorable Perfections; how forcibly do they lead to Piety! piety is the Foundation of Religion, and of all Purity and Virtue. For, if it were made us and not we ourselves, "and all that we enjoy, is his continual Gift; then not we ourselves, but He, have given us Laws, and require Obedience from us."

"All the Creation and Providence do thus imply an Piety in living to the Glory of God; so more especially both the Article of Faith in the Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ, inculcate the same. There is nothing in it that tends to encourage Sin; but conversely exhort to the strictest Purity and Holiness. To promote which, the Holy Scripture, (the best Explication of our Religion,) applies all the Doctrines and Articles of it. And,

"The sealing the Holy Ghost to enable us so to do our Duty, is a great Encouragement to it. The of Ourselves, we are not able to think a good Thought, much less to perform that Obedience, which is the Condition of the New-Covenant; yet by the Help of the Holy Spirit, our sincere Endeavours can never

never fail in this great Work, upon which our eternal Salvation depends.

So that the whole Trinity, (we see,) is united, in the creating, preserving, redeeming, and sanctifying us: and he that is persuaded of these things, must surely improve and benefit by them.

Let no Man, therefore, think that he can lead a virtuous Life without Faith, as with it; for this Reason, because he who has no Faith, cannot, by the Strength of his own Reason or Endeavours, so easily resist Temptations, as the Other, who depends upon God's Assistance in the overcoming his Faults, and is sure to be rewarded for ever in Heaven for his Victory over them. "Faith, (says the Apostle,) is the Evidence of things not seen." He means, that Faith is a Virtue by which any thing commanded us by God to believe, appears evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it; because, by Faith we entirely depend upon the Truth and Power of God.

From what hath been said, it is manifest, that God did never command us to believe, nor his Ministers to preach, any Doctrine which is contrary to the Reason he hath pleased to endow us with; but for his own wise Ends has thought fit to conceal from us the Nature of the thing he commands.

On the Trinity.

Step 3.

And they say unto him, Who is Obedient, and increaseth his Dependence upon him? — And, pols H. ond
yd I am highly probable, that if God should please to
communicate this great Mystery of the Trinity,
or some other Mysterie in our holy Religion, we
should not be able to understand them, unless he
would be the same Time, think fit to bestow on us
some New Powers or Faculties of the Mind, which
we want at present; and are reserved till the Day
of Resurrection to Life eternal. — For now, (as the
Apostle says,) we see through a Glass darkly, but
then Face to Face.

Thus, we see, the Matter is brought to this Issue;
we must either believe what God directly commands
in holy Scripture, or we must wholly reject the
Scripture and the Christian Religion which we pre-
tend to profess: but this, I hope, is too desperate a
Step for any of us to make.

I shall now draw a few Inferences, and Observa-
tions, from what has been said; — And, aw tho' W
— First, it would be well if People would not lay
so much Weight on their own Reason in Matters of
Religion, as to think every thing impossible and
absurd which they cannot conceive. How often do
we contradict the right Rules of Reason in the whole

Course

Course of our Lives ? Reason itself is true and just, but the Reason of every particular Man is weak and wavering ; perpetually swayed and turned by his Interests, his Passions, and his Vices. Let any Man but consider when he hath a Controversy with another, tho' his Cause be ever so unjust, tho' the whole World be against him, how blinded he is by the Love of himself, to believe that Right is Wrong, and Wrong is Right, when it makes for his own Advantage. Where is, then, the right Use of his Reason, which he so much boasts of, and which he would blasphemously set up to controul the Commands of the Almighty ? — But,

2dly, Those strong Unbelievers, who expect that all Mysteries should be fitted to their own Reason, might have somewhat to say for themselves, if they could satisfy the general Reason of Mankind in their own Opinions ; but herein they are miserably defective, absurd, and ridiculous ; they strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel ; they can believe that the World was made by Chance ; that God doth not concern himself with things below, will neither punish Vice, nor reward Virtue ; that Religion was invented by cunning Men to keep the World in Awe, with many other Opinions equally false and detestable, against the common Light of Nature as well

answering against the universal Sentiment of all
civilised Nations; and offering to the Evangelical
Reader Satisfaction.

Lastly, Since the World abounds with pestilent
Books, particularly written against the Doctrine of
the Trinity; it is fit to inform you, that the Authors
of them proceed wholly upon a Mistake! they
would shew how impossible it is that three can be
one, and one can be three; whereas the Scripture
teaching such a thing, at least in that Manner they
would shew it: But only that there is some kind of
Unity and Distinction in the three Persons, which
Mankind cannot perfectly comprehend: — Then the
whole Doctrine is manifestly plain, which is itself now
capable of any Controversy; since God himself hath
pronounced the Fact, but wholly concealed the
Manner. And therefore many Divines who thought
fit to answer those wicked Books, have been mis-
taken too, by “answering Fools in their Folly;” and
endeavouring to explain a Mystery which God in-
tended to keep secret from us. — And,

As it is adviseable for all Men to avoid reading
those wicked Books written against this Doctrine,
as dangerous and pernicious; so we think they may
omit the Answers, as unnecessary. This we confess
will probably affect but few or none among the Ge-
nerality

sterility of Christians, who do not much trouble themselves with Books, at least of this Kind. However, many who do not read themselves, are seduced by others that do; and thus become Unbelievers upon Trust; and this is too frequent a Case: for which Reason I have endeavoured to put this Doctrine upon a short and sure Foot, levelled to the meanest Understanding; by which we may, (as the Apostle directs,) "be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, with Meekness and Fear."

The Doctrines of opposite Opinions, and what we are separately to believe and practise in this Case, will conclude the Subject before us.

Sermon

On the Trinity.

1 John v. 7. "There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these Three are One."

It never yet could be discovered why Men should so warmly defend any of the Anti-Trinitarian, (either Deistical, Socinian, or Arian) Heresies, against the clear Light & manifest Authority of the Scriptures. Nor can it be conceived, what great Advantage it would be to them, could they support their erroneous Principles, with Arguments more cogent and conclusive than they have hitherto been able to produce.

Scripture has directed us to worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, as clearly as it is possible for Words to express, and God himself has wonderfully condescended to reveal as much of his own incomprehensible Nature as it was agreeable to him we should know; or, in short, convenient, necessary,

or

or possible for us to understand. But, Vain Man! generally most ignorant of what he is most assured, chuses rather to dispute the Being of his God, than modestly to confess, that he cannot "find him out to Perfection."

As for Deism, we scarce need trouble ourselves with any thing against it. It carries its own Confutation along with it. The absolute Necessity of a Mediator is no less apparent, in Order to ransom us from Death, and recover our forfeited Title to Happiness, to render our imperfect Services somewhat acceptable, and particularly to atone for our manifold Sins & Transgressions, than Omnipotence itself, in the Creation & Preservation of the World.

How compleat the Perfection of the Rest of the Creation was, before the Fall of Man, and the Curse consequent upon it, we cannot absolutely determine: But doubtless, there was more Harmony and Concord, more Beauty and Regularity, than at present appears: - and, even yet, in many Instances, we may find Providence is more indulgent to the inferior Class of Beings, than to That which was designed Master of the Creation. Man comes into the World helpless and defenceless, and is long exposed to more and greater Difficulties than he himself is capable of surmounting. — When Reason begins to dawn,

great

great is the Necessity of good and early Instruction, lest the Passions prevail, and extinguish the Light of Reason; or, if they are happily awed, & carefully kept under, Vanity or Pride, (term it which you please,) frequently breaks-in upon it, painting many things in deceitful Colours; magnifying some, diminishing others, over-shadowing more; at the same Time holding-up a false Mirror, thro' which DELuded Man fancies he sees and discerns all things clearly and distinctly as they are.

That boasted Prerogative of human Nature, Reason, when attended with this Fōible, Vanity, (too constant an Attendant on it,) has led many into such Errors, and filled them with such Vain-Conceit, as "the Voice of the Charmer" is not able to extricate them out of, or remove, "charm he never so wisely."

This is the Misfortune of the opinionated Deist, In his own INFALLIBLE Judgment he has found-out a Method to reconcile infinite Justice and Purity, with rebellious Insolence, and wilful Pollution; to prescribe infinite Power with finite Prescription, and to comprehend infinite Wisdom within finite Understanding. He presumptuously pretends to that Knowledge which the Angels themselves dare not aspire to, and to be thoroughly acquainted with

Serm. LXV,

those

whose Mysteries, they but humbly petition to look into. — In short, he has said, in Effect, to Omnipotence, what Omnipotence most reasonably said to the proud Waves, (the Operations of his Hands,) “Hitherto shall thou pass, and No further.”

Whilst he continues thus blind to all REVEALED Truths, “it will be but lost Labour” to endeavour to draw the Veil from before his Eyes. All that can be done, is, to pray that God would be so indulgent to him as once more to make him an Offer of that Grace, he has so unreasonably and ungenerously rejected, which can only work the Cure.

As to the Abettors of the Anti-trinitarian Heresies, whether Arian or Socinian, or any other Sect, as there have been, and are still many, who are all of them equally absurd and wicked; it cannot be seen, (as before observed,) of what Advantage it could possibly be to them, could they maintain their destructive Principles with more Reason than hitherto they have been able to advance.

The Tenets of both Arius and Socinus are too well known to need repeating in this Place (A); but, as we shall make it our Endeavour, in one Part
(A) See Note (B) page 373 &c.

of this Discourse; to make some Reply to them, it may, in some Measure; be an Excuse for our repeating what you already know. If nothing New shall be produced, as their Adherents still continue to repeat, with little Variations, the old Objections, sure it may be allowable to return them the ~~old~~ unanswered Replies, with no fewer Alterations. And,

First, Arius impiously affirmed there was a Time, when the Son was not; - that he was a Creature, and made-out of Nothing; - mutable in his Nature; and, like the Angels, liable to Sin; - that being unaccustomed to human Flesh, he supplied the Place of the human Soul, and was consequently subject to Sufferings and Pain.

Socinus, (not more Orthodox than the former,) maintained, that the Supreme Deity is personally but One; - that our Blessed Saviour is not God over all; - he had no Existence before his Birth of the Virgin Mary; - that whatever is said of his Merit, and Satisfaction for Sin, and Redemption of Sinners, is certainly to be understood in a METAPHORICAL Sense; and, that the Holy Ghost is no more than a Divine Influence, without any personal Existence at all.

Serm. LXV.

Here

Here, the Ax may aptly be said to be laid at the Root of the Tree ; and, if this Stroke cannot be averted, Christianity, with Religion, must fall.

How unreasonable, may we say, those People are, who censure our Church for making-use of Creeds ; where this Doctrine, and all other derogatory of the Truth and Dignity of the Three Persons in the Holy Trinity, is anathematized ! May we not justly conclude, they give us but too-much Reason to suspect the Soundness of their Faith ? - For, if they do not condemn the Heresy , we cannot pronounce them clear of the Infection.

Such Declarations as these, call aloud for open & universal Reproof , and every One that has any Belief in our Saviour's own Words, ("whosoever shall deny me before Men , him will I also deny before my Father , which is in Heaven ,") should be zealous to attest and demonstrate the Absurdity and Falshood of such Doctrine. And First,

When Men once deviate from the Paths of Truth, they seldom can agree to keep-pace together. Whatever Motives led them aside, or whatever Temptations allured them out of the common Way , we soon find them seperate ; One Party concluding within themselves, at least , that they have discove-

red

red a safer and nearer Road; and it seldom happens, that any of them have that commendable Assurance to return back into the right Way; rather suffering themselves to be lost in the dark and intricate Mazes of Error and Obsturacy, than modestly to own their Mistake, or even acknowledge the Possibility of their having erred, or been misled from the Truth.

Arius, one of the Pribyters of Alexandria, merely in Opposition to Achillas, Bishop of that See, to which he thought he had as just Precautions, and was slighted in the Council, publishes the Doctrine, That there was a Time, when the Son was not, without any Limitation: Whereas, Socinus, (we find,) fixes precisely, and determines that He had no Existence before his Birth of the Virgin Mary.

Arius was rather more cautious when he ventured out of the right Way; but Socinus, after he had followed him a little, went greater Lengths: The former had not lost all Sight of the Gospel: whereas, the latter quite closed his Eyes against it. And, tho' this small Difference may, at first Sight, appear trifling; yet, a little Inquiry will evidence it to be very considerable.

Arius would fix upon no Time, when our Saviour should begin to exist, knowing that he could not
Serm. LXV. then

then so easily shift his Ground, and defend himself ; whilst Socinus , heated with a vain Imagination of his own Abilities , peremptorily determines it , and has thereby manifested the Error of both , and his own Ignorance in particular.

Had he remembered That remarkable Conference between the unbelieving, captious Jews, and our Saviour, he certainly would have been a little more cautious ; for it is express against him : I shall only repeat what immediately concerns us, without repeating the Passage at Length. “ Then said the “ Jews unto him, Thou art not yet FIFTY Years old, “ and ! Hast thou seen Abraham ? Jesus said unto “ them ; verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abra-“ ham was, I am.” But,

Let us proceed to Evidence, and scrutinize their Depositions upon Cross-Examination ; and we shall, I think , be able to detect them in various Contradictions : Which , (in other Cases,) is allowed to render the Credit and Testimony of any, invalid.

Arius affirms, that our Saviour was a Creature , made of nothing, mutable in his Nature, and, (like the Angles,) liable to Sin. — Socinus says, Whatever is said of our Saviour’s Merit, and Satisfaction for Sin, and Redemption for Sinners, is certainly to be

be understood in a METAPHORICAL Sense.

Here we are to observe, that Arius passes over, in Silence, the Mediatorial Office of our Saviour, well knowing, that, opposing That, was to deny the Necessity of a Mediator; and Sin had not yet so far led him captive, as to believe that Mankind could stand before the Throne of Judgment without an Advocate.

When Socinus perceived that what the other had advanced, wanted not its Votaries, he was sensible that no created Being could possibly atone for the Sins of another, much less for the Sins of the whole World; wherefore, out of his abundant Wisdom, he has told us, that all that is said of our Blessed Saviour's Merit, is to be understood in a METAPHORICAL Sense. But,

We may justly ask, will a METAPHORICAL Saviour stand him, or us, in any Stead? — Our Sins are numerous and glaring, and call-aloud for Justice; will a METAPHORICAL Plea satisfy and appease it? If our Saviour's Merit, Satisfaction for Sin, and Redemption for Sinners, is thus to be argued-away, the most comfortable and desireable Part of the Scriptures may stand as dead Letters; and, in short, all the Epistles and Writings of the orthodox primitive Christians, be deemed only a Rhapsody of Nonsense: no Regard need be paid to our Saviour's

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Injunction

Injunction, "Go ye, teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, & of the Holy Ghost;" for we are here taught that they are Words without any Meaning.

What Sense, in this Case, can we possibly make of our Saviour's Address to the Father, if these Men's Doctrine must stand? Or, must they be credited sooner than the beloved Disciple? "I have finished, saith Christ, the Work which thou gavest me to do; And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was." And,

Was he, (what they have blasphemously asserted,) a created Being, what must we account of St. Paul, that great Apostle, who plainly tells us, that "Jesus Christ thought it no Robbery to be EQUAL with God." He tells us in another Place, that "he was ordained a Preacher, and an Apostle, - that he spoke the Truth in Christ, and says, there is One God, & one Mediator between God & Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all :" but, if we believe Socinus and his Followers, that Christ's Sufferings and Death were in no Way, meritorious; what has St. Paul been doing, but, (to use his own Expression,) "beating the Air?"

Had

Arius and Socinus; Confuted.

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Had these Men spoke out fairly their Minds at first, what they have, in Effect, by little and little, at Length declared, [viz.] that Jesus Christ himself was an Impostor, — that the Revelation of the Old & New-Testament is an human Imposition, and that God never made any, nor Man stood in need of one; — that let us be ever so wicked & rebellious, a bare Recantation is sufficient; or if suddenly taken-off in the Height of our Iniquity, infinite Justice must acquit us; for we can in no Way disqualify ourselves for the Title of infinite and eternal Happiness: — Had they made this open Declaration, they had saved the World much Pains; and doubtless, done much less Mischief. However,

Let them make as light as they will of our Saviour and his Disciples, they must allow, at least, that they were true Prophets: They fore-told that such Men should flourish; & our Saviour says, “if it were possible, they should deceive the very Elect.” St. Peter observes likewise, that “There shall come Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts; — that there should arise false Teachers, who privily should bring-in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction;” and then adds, “Many shall follow their pernicious Ways, by Reason of whom the Way of Truth shall be evil-spoken of.”

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Undoubtedly

Undoubtedly, We shall never be blamed, for not comprehending INCOMPREHENSIBLE Truths, and as certainly become answerable for denying them. But Socinus peremptorily asserts the supreme Deity, in Contradiction to all Revelation, is PERSONALLY but One; & accordingly makes the Holy Ghost no more than a divine Influence, without any PERSONAL Existence. (A) And I must this Man's Word prevail against his Authority, to whom all the Prophets give Witness? I am almost afraid to repeat our Saviour's own Words, lest they should seem to be levelled against him.

"Wherefore, I say unto you, all Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men ; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men ; and whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man , it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, hath never Forgiveness, neither in this World, nor in the World to come." But perhaps,

~~He would tell us, This, likewise, is to be understood in a METAPHORICAL Sense. — Alas! such Pleading, such Equivocation, will never avail at That Bar where we must all receive the irrevocable Sentence.~~ Having

(A) See this Notion confuted, page 391, &c. preceding.

Having thus cursorily run-over some of the Dispositions of these two grand Apostates, who want not now their Followers and Votaries; and shewn the Contrariety manifest in their Verdicts, let us dismiss them as very exceptionable Evidences and see whether their present Advocates are not as liable to be discredited, who have but little more to defend themselves by, than the former Arguments new-modelled, and sometimes more impiously asserted.

Their Followers are too numerous to be mentioned, much more their Absurdities too many to be recited; it shall, therefore, suffice only to single-out some of the most important, which if undeniably made manifest, may be sufficient to expose all the rest.

The first Objection against the commonly received Doctrine of the Trinity by them made, and of which I shall take notice, is, that however clear it may be to Men of Judgment & Learning; yet to Christians in general, it cannot be so. — And, Clearness and Perspicuity in fundamental Doctrines, (of which this must be confessed one,) is generally allowed, and confessed by all.

I shall not here take the Advantage of them, for
Serm. LXV. allowing

allowing That to be in any wise clear to **SOME**, which they have in many Places affirmed to be absolutely dark and obscure to **ALL**; but rather endeavour to demonstrate it to be so, no less to the **Unlearned**, than the **Learned**. And here,

If they mean by the Words, **CLEAR, COMPREHENSIBLE**, we deny the Objection, as to **EITHER**; but if they only understand by it, not Inconsistent or contradictory, inclusive; then, we say, it is equally apparent to both.

Mysteries would undoubtedly never have been revealed, unless they were designed to be inquired into; but then, as they are **Mysteries**, That should be sufficient to admonish us, that such Inquiries should always be attended with Reverence, and profound Humility: — therefore, it may, and often does happen, where the **Unlearned** are satisfied and content with a general Account, that his Conception of a divinely revealed Truth, is clearer than That of the more learned; who will not rest easy without diving for Conviction into all the Particulars.

One Instance to confirm This, is as good as a thousand. — Many, who have perplexed and confounded themselves with the Succession of Time, or past Duration, have at last concluded with an Idea

of

of Eternity more imperfect and inadequate, than they who were so far from searching so particularly, that they were unacquainted with the very Terms
(a). — The Reason is obvious;

The unlearned sit-down convinced with their FIRST Notions of it, and inquire no further; whereas, the other totally obscures it, by heaping-up Difficulties, and mixing Ambiguities.

Mysteries, (as already observed,) were revealed to be enquired into, and embraced; but not to be discovered or comprehended, for then they would cease to be such; neither are they less important for being obscure, as our Adversaries would insinuate; but sometimes the more so upon that very Account; wherefore, the Unlearned may receive and embrace them, and the Learned can do no more; unless, (as too often,) by a presumptuous Scrutiny, they render them more mysterious.

The Man that offers-up his Prayers, whilst in his Employ, undeniably confesses the Presence of the Almighty every where: - but, if you send him to

(A) We read of a Philosopher, who declared of himself, that the first Year he entered upon the Study of Philosophy, he knew all things; the second Year he knew something; but the third Year nothing. The more he studied, the more he declined in the Opinion of his own Knowledge, and saw more the Shortness of his Understanding.

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the Philosopher, to comprehend the Meaning of Ubiquity, it is more than probable he returns affirming, or suspecting it to be no where. — In like Manner, the common Christian, (and there are few but what can,) who can answer in the Words of our excellent Catechism, what he learns and is taught, in the Articles of his Belief, and remains satisfied within himself of the Truth and Certainty of it [viz] that he hath “learned FIRST, to believe in God the Father, who hath made him, and all the World; — 2dly, In God, the Son, who hath redeemed him, and all Mankind; — and 3dly, In God, the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him, and all the Elect People of God;” — Such a One has a clearer and more distinct Notion of the Trinity; than he, who has puzzled and confounded himself with the Terms, Nature, Person, Essence, Substance, Subsistence, Co-equality, Co-essentiality, and the like — which are without End, and sometimes to no End; or worse, breeding Strife and Contention, and darkening the Minds of Men, instead of clearing them.

Since this is the Case, instead of arguing thus closely whether a COMMON Christian can comprehend any thing of this Mystery, may we not rather conclude he has clearer and more perfect Ideas of those things than he that presumes to pry into them.

Indeed,

Objections answered.

Indeed, to Men of but common Sense, the Question answers itself; so that instead of the Objection, that is it above the Capacity of the Unlearned to comprehend any thing of the Trinity, being an Argument against the Importance of it, we perceive, (it being no less plain & evident to them, than to the most Learned and Laborious,) is rather a Proof and Confirmation of the Truth and Reality of it. - We grant, indeed, that the one may be more regular & distinguishing in giving his Ideas and Definition, but the other may be as firm, and as orthodox in the Faith. In short,

Was this Objection to be allowed momentous, & of Consequence, Christianity and Casuistry might be proved no less dependant on each other, & practical Deists, & professed Hereticks, Arians or Socinians, proved real Atheists: Numbers of them being as incapable to defend the Proof of the Being of a God against the Sophistry of the Age, as the most illiterate Christians, to support the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Another Objection generally made, and by Unbelievers of every Denomination, strenuously maintained, is, that this Doctrine is contradictory to common Sense; and consequently, unreasonable to be believed.

One thing we may safely venture to say, that there is no Objection has been brought by Unbelievers as yet, against the Truth and Importance of this Doctrine but which, upon Examination, will be found much more unreasonable and absurd. For,

First, without Reason, and in Opposition to Revelation, one Part of the Socinians object against the Divinity of the Second and Third Persons in the Trinity, affirming them to be Creatures; which, as they allow Divine Honour to be due to Christ, proves them to be guilty of a grosser Sort of Idolatry, than even the Heathens themselves ever gave into. To join Creatures into one Holy Trinity with God, & baptize Men into the Faith & Worship of Creatures, far surpasses all Pagan-Theology; and instead of extricating themselves out of any Difficulties, involves them ten-fold more, in Absurdity and Contradiction. But,

II. Another Sort deny the Second and Third of the Trinity to be PERSONS, and make them no more than the Power and Wisdom of God; One call'd his Word; the Other his Spirit; but yet, that they are nothing different from God; But! - Into what Error and Confusion must such an Assertion necessarily and unavoidably lead them? - For, Upon this Conclusion,

sinful; they cannot stop at the Trinity in God; But must daily, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) all his other Attributes, as His Justice, Mercy, Providence, Omnipotence, Ubiquity, with many more, in equally, (upon their Principles,) effectually perniciously, with those two, they have so distinguished. So that instead of the Three in Heaven, which they confess, every Attribute must be acknowledged as God.

It would be needless and endless to enumerate all their Contradictions, and to shew how they differ among themselves, if it is possible, even more than they do from us: — One Sort of them making the Object of their Worship, God; Another, only a Creature: One, ascribing THREE Persons in the Trinity; Another but ONE? Thus, the one Part accusing the other of Idolatry in paying Adoration to a Creature; whilst that is condemned for Profane and anathematised Faith, for forbidding divine Honour to whom it is due.

All for our Part, we will use of the Gospel pro-
prietate our Texts for these things; and then be content to address to any disinterested Heathen or Jew, or if they please, to any of their own Friends among the Mahometan-Unitarians, whether the Truths that

we so earnestly contend for, from the Writings delivered to the Saints, which are clearly laid down and manifestly contained in them? And consequently, if they believed those Passages to be immediately inspired from God, as these Men that we have no deal with pretend to do, and use their great Master, with great Strength of Reason; once by him rightly employed, has proved that they are, whether they would not gladly embrace them, and subscribe to them? And if so, are not Jews, or Turks, or profest Infidels, in this Case more excusable than these Perverters of those Revelations which they themselves acknowledge to be divine? Certainly it would be much more ingenuous, roundly and frankly to reject at once the whole Gospel than thus to use it. And this Proceeding would better become that Candor and Freedom of Spirit, and philosophical Plainness and natural Probity, that is so much pretended and boasted of by some Men. But, to twist Scripture as they do, to expound it any sense by the most forced, improper, and unusual Interpretations, as the Sectarians freely own they do, and will do, rather than acknowledge any Doctrine in it which seems to contradict their Reason, is to assume such a Power over divine Writ, as over any human Writings, would never be allowed or endured; nay worse,

How to make the **Oracles** of the true God, which
were designed for the salvation and instruction of Mankind,
so ambiguous and obscure; as those delivered by the
false Gods of the Heathen, on Purpose to deceive.

We may therefore leave it to every One a impartial Judgment, whether they, who by denying these
things, thereby proceeding to a more pure and ra-
tional Christianity, ^{say,} without any vileness, with
putting Charity to the utmost Stretch, ^{are} allowed
to much as the Name of Christians.

I shall Conclude this with the Observation of a
learned Bishop, on the Doctrine of the Catholick
Church for the first three Ages of Christianity, con-
cerning the Blessed Trinity, considered in Opposi-
tion to Sabellianism and Trichotomy, and with the Al-
legations of the established Catholic in like Case.

"Of such a Distinction and Union of Persons,
says the learned Prelate, we have, indeed, no Ex-
ample, or exact Similitude among created Beings:
But, what then? It does not follow, that therefore,
there can be such a Distinction and Union in the
transcendent and most spiritual Nature of God.
The Anti-Trinitarians can never produce a demon-
strative Reason to prove that this cannot be; and
Divine Revelation, plainly assures us, that so it is."

"THERE is," therefore, "but One living and
true God, everlasting, without Body, Parts, or
Passions; of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Good-
ness, the Maker, and Preserver, of all things both
visible and invisible. And in Unity of this God,
bead there be THREE Persons, of One Substance,

as above, LXV.

"Power

That there is, and must be some real Union and Communion
in Godhead between the Sacred Three, to answer and support the
Divine Names, Titles, and Attributes, which are severally attribu-
ted to them all; and that there is, and must be some sufficient Dis-
tinction to sustain their distinct personal Characters and Offices, and
to answer those distinct Representations in Scripture, is evident; the
how far this *Union* of Godhead and the *Persons* of *Distinction* extend
they can in any way be to find out exactly, or to determine in the Uga-
nity and Consistency of one Fellow-Church.

That there be THREE GODS, and NOT ONE, is evident, and

We so earnestly contend for, than the Writings delivered to the Saints, which are clearly laid down and manifestly contained in them; And consequently, if they believed those Passages to be immediately inspired from God, as their Men that we have so dealt with pretend to do, and as their great Master, with great Strength of Reason, once lay him rightly employed, has proved that they are, whether they would not gladly embrace them, and subscribe to them? And if so, are not Jews, or Turks, or profest Infidels, in this Case more excusable than those Perverters of those Revelations which they themselves acknowledge to be divine? Certainly it would be much more ingenuous, roundly and frankly to reject at once the whole Gospel than thus to use it. And this Proceeding would better become that Candor and Freedom of Spirit, and philosophical Plainness and natural Probity, that is so much pretended and boasted of by some Men. But, to wrest Scripture as they do, to expound it any sense by the most forced, improper, and unusual Interpretations, as the Socinians freely own they do, and will do, rather than acknowledge any Doctrine in it which seems to contradict their Reasons, is to assume such a Power over divine Writ, as over any human Writing, would never be allowed or endured; nay worse,

It is no small thing to call the **Oracles of the true God**, which were designed to enlighten and instruct Mankind, ambiguous and obscure; as those delivered by the false Gods of the Heathen, on Purpose to deceive.

We may therefore leave it to every One a impartial Judgment, whether they, who by denying these things; thereby proceeding to a more pale and rational Christianity, than, without; or, venturing with putting Charity to the utmost Stretch, be allowed so much as the Name of Christians.

I shall Conclude this with the Observation of a learned Bishop, on the Doctrine of the Catholick Church for the first three Ages of Christianity, concerning the Blessed Trinity, considered in Opposition to Sabellianism and Unitarianism, and with the Assertions of the established Catholic in the Cafes.

Of such a Distinction and Union of Persons, says the learned Prelate, we have, indeed, no Example, or exact Similitude among Created Beings: But, what then? he does not follow, that therefore, there can not be such a Distinction and Union in the Transcendent and, most singular Nature of God. The Anti-Trinitarians can never produce a demonstrative Reason to prove that this cannot be, and to be taken in the full, common, and literal Sense, for a distinct created Being; but only in a qualified and restrained Sense, or a Sense that is peculiar, or akin to the common Meaning among Men, is evident; for three distinct Persons in the common and literal Sense of it, would be three distinct Persons; which very few Trinitarians allow.

"Power and Eternity; the FATHER, the SON, and
"the HOLY GHOST." (*)—"One God; One Lord,
"not One only Person; but Three Persons in One
"Substance; for that which we believe of the Glo-
"ry of the Father, the same we believe of the Son,
"and of the Holy Ghost, without any Difference or
"Inequality." (†) For "the Catholic Faith is this:
"That we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity
"in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor
"dividing the Substance: for there is One Person
"of the Father; another of the Son; and another of
"the Holy Ghost: but the Godhead of the Father,
"of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all One; the
"Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal." (‡) Agree-
ably to which, we find the other Creeds, (the Apostles'
and Nicene,) equally full in expressing each
Person of the Divine Godhead distinctly. So that
the True Nature of the Divine Existence is as
positive and real by divine Assertion and the Chris-
tian Faith, as the Union of the Body and Soul of
Man itself, nor less mysterious to our Understandings,
or contradictory to our Conceptions. (§)

(*) The first Article of Religion.

(†) The Preface for Trinity-Sunday, in the Communion Service.

(‡) Athanasius, in his Confession of Faith.

(§) See this Doctrine more fully spoken-to, in the Discourse on
Trinity-Sunday, in this Work.

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SERMON LXVI.

On the Name Subject.

1 John v. 7. "There are Three that bear Record
"in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy
"Ghost: And these Three are One."

Having already confuted the Doctrine of the Anti-Trinitarians, whether Deists, Arians or Socinians; and consequently established the Principle asserted in the Words before us, I shall now, (by Way of Conclusion to the Whole,) recognize and see, (according to our former Arguments,) what the Scripture speaks of Each of the Persons of the Sacred Trinity, separately; and our Duty to them.

A Doctrine this, which ought not to be frequently & lightly handled, but with great Caution & Reverence be EXPLAINED at Once: EXPLAINED; (i.e.) not unfolded according to the Presumptions of human Imagination; but DECLARED so far, as it is expressly revealed in Scripture; and so far forth, as it is, therefore, intelligible, because it is revealed. For in Doctrines which are not made known by the

Light

Light of Reason and natural Understanding, but discovered merely by Revelation, and which depend wholly on the Authority and Testimony of the Revealer; in these things, human Imagination has no Place, and the Opinion of no Man is of any Importance, but only the express Words of the Revelation itself.

In declaring, therefore, what is clearly and without all Controversy revealed in Scripture concerning the Father, - the Son, - and the Holy Ghost; I shall,

First, Consider briefly that which is SPECULATIVE, concerning their NATURE.

II. That which is MORAL, relating to their OFFICES. And,

Lastly, That which is PRACTICAL, concerning the HONOUR we are to pay unto them. And,

First, I am to consider what is spoken in a SPECULATIVE Manner concerning their NATURE. And, This Part being That, in which we are least concerned, & which we are least capable to understand, the Scripture is very brief in this Particular: It being of much more Importance that it should be clearly revealed to us, what they are RELATIVELY TO Us,

Us, than what their Nature is ABSOLUTELY IN THEMSELVES. Yet, even upon This Head we find in Scripture, as follows. [viz.]

Concerning the Nature of God, the Father; that, agreeable to the Light of natural Reason, there is One Supreme Absolute Independent Cause and Original of all things, Eternal, Infinite, All-Powerful, Self-Sufficient; the Maker and Lord of all things, himself derived from None, made of none, begotten of none, proceeding from none: By whom all Creatures material and immaterial, visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, rational, and irrational, mortal and immortal in Heaven and in Earth, were made; by whom the Land and Waters, the Air and Sun and Stars, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens, and all things that are therein, Plants, and Beasts, and Men; Angels and Arch-Angels; were created out of nothing: From whom the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter and Sanctifier of all Holy Men, PROCEEDETH, or is sent forth: Of whom lastly the Son himself, the Saviour and Redeemer of the World, in an ineffable Manner, before all Ages was BEGOTTEN.

This is the Supreme Father and Lord of all, who dwelleth in Light inaccessible; whose Majesty, no Thought can comprehend; whose Glory, no Eye can behold
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behold ; whose Power, no Strength can resist, from whose Presence, no Swiftness can flee; whose Knowledge, no Secrecy can conceal itself from; whose Justice, no Art can evade; whose Goodness, no Creature but partakes of. — This is the God of the Universe, whom even the Heathen World has always acknowledged. This is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; the God who brought the Children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; of whom, and thro' whom, & to whom are all things; to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever. But,

II. Concerning the Nature of the Son; That which the Scripture declares to us, (and otherwise than from Scripture we can have no Light, in Matters of Revelation;) is this : That, in the Beginning, before the Foundation of the World, before all Ages, That Divine Person, who after and by his Incarnation became our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, had a Being in the Bosom of his Father, and was Partaker of his Father's Glory, being the Word (A) by

which

(A) The Reason why this Divine Person was styled the WORD, has been much disputed by Divines; and various Opinions have at different Times prevailed. That which is most probable and most agreeable to the Scriptures, is, that he was so called, upon Account of his being, as it were, the Mouth and Oracle of God, the Angel of his Presence

Speculative Nature of God, the Son. 109

which God created and governed all things ; and by whom he hath revealed Himself and his Will to Mankind, and thro' whom He receives our Prayes and Praises, offered by him. But further,

Concerning the Nature of this Divine Person, the Word, or Son of God, the Scripture adds ; that he is "the only begotten of the Father," and was in "Glory with him before the World" was ; that he is the "Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express

Presence, the great Declarer of his Will, the Mediator between God and his Creatures ; by and thro' whom, as all Creatures have Access to God, and give Glory to him ; so thro' him likewise are derived and conveyed all Communications of God to his Creatures. "In the Beginning was the Word :" That Word, which afterwards "was made Flesh and dwelt among us," to reveal to us with Authority the whole Will of God : That Word, concerning whom the same Author thus speaks in another Place ; when in his Vision, seeing "the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, coming forth in Righteousness to judge and to make War, and to tread the Wine-Press of the Wrath of Almighty God," he thus describes him ; that "out of his Mouth goeth a Sharp Sword, and his Name is called, THE WORD OF GOD." And again, he "beheld one like unto the Son of Man, out of whose Mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword." Which Descriptions afford great Light to that Passage of St. Paul to the Hebrews, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart." And this exactly answers the Description our Saviour gives of Himself. "I am He which searcheth the Reins and Hearts."

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press Image of his Person, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power." That he is "the Image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every Creature," (i.e.) was before, and above all things, being the first Principle and Head over all; Himself, deriving IMMEDIATELY from the Father only; (and as to the Manner of That, "who shall declare his Generation?") Whereas all other things, all Creatures, were produced MEDIATELY by his Operation. For so St. John affirms expressly; "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And St. Paul still more distinctly, "By him were all things created, that are in Heaven; and that are in Earth, visible, or invisible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers, all things were created by him & for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (A) But further,

(A) If it be here demanded, how these two different Expressions are to be reconciled, that God only is the Creator of all things, and yet all things are said expressly to be created by Jesus Christ; St. Paul gives a clear and direct Answer, [viz.] Heb. i, 2. "By his Son God made the World;" and again, Eph. iii, 9. "Who created all things by Jesus Christ."

To interpret these Passages, as some have attempted to do, Of a *figurative* and *symbolical Creation*, the New Creation or Renovation of things by the *Gospel*; is wresting Texts by a forced & unnatural Sense to serve an Opinion, when in their plain & literal Meaning there is no Difficulty

Concerning the Nature of the Holy Spirit of God, the Scripture speaks very little in a Metaphysical Manner; nor gives any Encouragement to the Inquisition and vain Curiosity of Human Speculation.

Difficulty. For, to conceivethat God created all things at first by his Son, is no more contrary to Reason, than his renewing or redeeming all things by his Son; which is acknowledged by all. And if "it pleased the Father by Christ to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be Things in Earth, or Things in Heaven" as St Paul expressly affirms, and all Men understand him to affirm it in the literal Sense; there is no more Reason to doubt, but in the literal Sense likewise, it pleased the Father by Christ to Create all things for Himself; which is as expressly affirmed by the same Apostle. And even in the Old Testament itself, those Passages which are spoken of Wisdom, (Prov. viii. 22: &c.) are By all ancient Christian Writers understood of God's creating all things by Christ, "Who was then by him, as one brought up with him; and was daily his Delight."

If it be here further inquired, how those divine Attributes and Powers, which are ascribed in Scripture to the Person of the Son, are consistent with the Unity of God, which is the Foundation of all Religion both natural and revealed; the Answer is obvious; [viz.] That the Divinity ascribed to the Son, is not another, a co-ordinate Divinity; but the Power, the Majesty and the Glory of the Father, communicated and derived to the Son. — Could it be affirmed that there were Two or more Self-Originated, unbegotten, undervived Principles; this would destroy the Unity of God, and fundamentally subvert the very first Ground of Religion: But since the Glory of the Son is not originally his own Glory, but the Glory of the Father manifested in him, and derived to him, in a Manner which neither we nor Angels perhaps can presume to understand; it is manifest still, that the Monarchy of the Universe is hereby preserved entire.

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culation : Declaring only, that he is a Divine Person, proceeding, or being sent-forth from the FATHER ; and in other Places called the Spirit of the Son, and said to be sent forth from Him. — Into the Manner of his Derivation, therefore, we ought not to presume to inquire ; but be content with what the Scripture reveals to us, of his being in a singular Manner, (i.e) in a Manner which we cannot presume to understand or explain, " the Spirit of God." Only, because there have been some in these later Ages, who have denied the Being of this Holy Spirit, and have imagined it to be nothing but a mere Power or Attribute of God ; it deserves to be taken Notice of, that those Scriptures, which speak of him as being GRIEVED at wicked Men ; as making INTERCESSION for us, and HELPING our InfirmitieS ; as DIVIDING spiritual gifts " severally, as he pleases ;" as " SPEAKING, not of himself," but what he HEARS or receives from the Father ; these and numberless other Texts in the new Testament, do plainly declare Him to be, not a mere Virtue or Power, (as already observed,) but a real Person distinct from the Father and the Son, & sent forth from Both for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church.

This is what the Scripture briefly declares to us in a SPECULATIVE Manner, concerning the NATURE of

the Father, - Son, - and Holy Ghost. — And Happy had it been for the Church of God, if learned Men in all Ages had been content with what the Scriptures so declare, & had never entered further into Scholastic Speculations, from whence have arisen endless Disputes, incurable Scepticism, and infinite Uncharitableness. But,

II, THERE is in the Second Place, That which is MORAL, concerning the several OFFICES of the Father, - Son, - and Holy Ghost, with Relation to Us. And here,

The Scripture teaches us, concerning the FATHER, that he, being absolutely Supreme over all, made the World by the Ministration of his Son, and governs it by a perpetual Providence; without which, not a Sparrow falls to the Ground, or a Hair of our Head perishes. — That having Compassion upon sinful Man, and resolving to afford them the Grace of Repentance, he sent his Son, to take our Nature upon him, and therein to reveal his gracious Will; delivered him up to an ignominious Death, that he might make Expiation and Reconciliation for our Sins; and raised him from the Dead by his mighty Power; and exalted him to his own Right-Hand; and appointed him to be the Judge of Quick and Dead; and has made all things subject unto Him;

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and by him reconciles all things unto Himself, both which are in Heaven, and which are in Earth : and has appointed a Kingdom of eternal Happiness to them that serve and obey him ; and will destroy the Wicked with an everlasting Destruction. — This is the Office of the Father.

Concerning the Office of the Son, the same Scriptures declare, that he, by the Appointment of the Father, is our Saviour, Mediator, Intercessor and Judge ; that having been in the Form of God , he emptied himself of that Glory , and willingly took upon him the Form of a Servant ; and died, to make our Repentance available ; & now sits at the Right-Hand of God to intercede for us ; and governs the whole Church, according to the Will of his Father ; and searches and tries the Hearts of Men at present, and will finally judge them, according to their Works.

Lastly, Concerning the Office of the Holy Spirit, the same Scripture likewise teaches us, that having been the Divine Inspirer of the Prophets of Old, testifying before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow ; he was afterwards sent-forth in a more extraordinary Manner, to be the Comforter and Director of the Apostles

these, - to lead them into all Truth; - to bring to their Remembrance all things which our Lord had said unto them; - to support them against the Powers of the World; - to instruct them what to answer in their Persecutors; - to be the great Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, by working Signs and Wonders & mighty Works, - by inspiring the Apostles with the Gift of Tongues, and dividing to their Followers, Diversities of Gifts, to every Man severally, as might best serve the great End of their Ministry: finally, to continue with all good Christians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of Men; assisting them with his Grace, admonishing them with his Holy Influences, working with them & inspiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the Infirmitiy of their Prayers with his own Intercession. (44)

This is what the Scripture teaches us distinctly & separately, concerning the several Offices of the Father, - the Son, - and the Holy Spirit. They are also, in some few Places, all mentioned together; as in the Form of Baptism, whereby we are dedicated to the Service of God, - baptized into the Death of his Son, - and given-up to the Guidance of his Holy Spirit. In the Form of Blessing, wherein we are recommended by the Apostle to the Love of God, -

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to

(44) See this more fully spoken-to, page 418. &c. -

in the Favour of Christ ; - and to the Communion or Fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And again by St. Paul, " There is One Spirit , - One Lord , - One God and Father of all , who is above all , and thro' all , and in you all ." And again, " There are Diversities of Gifts , but the same Spirit ; and there are Differences of Administrations , but the same Lord ; & there are Diversities of Operations , but the same God , that worketh all in all ." And in the Words before us, " There are Three that bear Record in Heaven , the Father , - the Word , - and the Holy Ghost : & these Three are One ." Upon the Whole,

It is God , by whose Supreme Authority every thing in the Universe is directed ; - It is the SON OF GOD , by whom the Government of the Church in particular is administered ; - and it is the SPIRIT OF GOD , by whom all Gifts and Graces , for the Conviction of Infidels , and for the Sanctification of Believers , are dispensed . — The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ , the infinite and incomprehensible Fountain of undervived Majesty , is the Spring and Original of all Good ; — The Son of the Father , is to Us the Author , the Purchaser and Conveyer of all COMMUNICATIONS FROM that inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness ; and by his Mediation and Intercession , the only Means of Access and Approach

prerogative of the Throne of otherwise inaccessible Glory. — The Son, now God, sent forth from the Father and the Son, is the immediate Dispenser and Distributer of those Benefits, which the Father grants by the Intercession of the Son.

This is what the Scripture clearly and expressly declares to us, concerning the Father, — the Son, — and the Holy Spirit. It remains now,

III. In the 3d. & last Place, that we consider that which is PRACTICAL concerning the Honour due to the Person of the Father, — and concerning That which is due to the Son, — and to the Holy Ghost.

From the Views already taken of the Offices of the Sacred Trinity we may naturally deduce a great and glorious Work Salvynce is, in bringing many Sons to Redemption; about which Each of the Trinity are so much concernedly bus, we should admire, praise, and above all extol them for our dependance work of such a Master. — Theologians along with us, consider continuallly, — how much of their Glory this Life, and this Eternity, — "Thee we may not find out, how determinate, clear, and positive, — how far the Sacred Three are the true, as to their Consideration." — *Contra Iudicium Iacob.* — *Saint Paul* shall deliver up the Kingdom, and become subject to Him that put all things under him, that God may be

to the Favour of Christ ; - and to the Communion or Fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And again by St. Paul, " There is One Spirit ; - One Lord , - One God and Father of all , who is above all , and thro' all, and in you all ." And again, " There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit ; and there are Differences of Administrations, but the same Lord ; & there are Diversities of Operations, but the same God, that worketh all in all ." And in the Words before us, " There are Three that bear Record in Heaven , the Father , - the Word , - and the Holy Ghost : & these Three are One ." Upon the Whole,

It is GOD , by whose Supreme Authority every thing in the Universe is directed ; - It is the SON of GOD , by whom the Government of the Church in particular is administered ; - and it is the SPIRIT of GOD , by whom all Gifts and Graces , for the Conviction of Infidels, and for the Sanctification of Believers, are dispensed. — The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the infinite and incomprehensible Fountain of undervived Majesty, is the Spring and Original of all Good ; — The Son of the Father, is to Us the Author, the Purchaser and Conveyer of all COMMUNICATIONS FROM that inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness ; and by his Médiation and Intercession, the only Means of Access and Approach

much more, that Throne of otherwise inaccessible Glory:—The Son of God, sent forth from the Father and the Son, is the immediate Dispenser, and same as to their ONENESS of Godhead, and how far they are different as to their distinct Personal Characters, yet it is our Duty to honour them according to the Revelation which Scripture hath made, (i.e.) we must pay each of them Divine Honour since they have Communion in Godhead; and we must transact our important Affairs of Salvation with them according to their distinct Offices, as our FATHER, our SAVIOUR, and SANCTISER. Particularly, ~~that we do now~~ To the Person of the Father, our (make) Praise and

To the Person of the Father, is to be directed that absolute and supreme Worship, by which he is acknowledged to be alone ~~the~~, the Maker and Judge of all; by whose incomprehensible Power, the World was created; by whose unerring Providence, the Universe is governed; by whose supreme Authority, our Lord was sent forth to redeem Us; by whose good Pleasure the Holy Spirit is given, to sanctify us; to whose Glory, every Tongue Now confesseth that Jesus is the Lord; and to whom, at the Consummation of all things, our Lord himself shall deliver-up the Kingdom, and become subject to Him that put all things under him, that God may be

be all in all ; — To Him we are to pray for the Remission of our Sins ; & that our Repentance may be accepted, thro' the powerful Intercession of Christ our great High Priest ; and that our Hearts may be renewed by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit : and to HIM we are to give continual Thanks , for his ORIGINAL and undeserved Goodness in sending his Son at first to be the Saviour of the World , and to be unto us a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood ; and for the CONTINUATION of that Goodness, in affording us the perpetual Assistance of the Holy Ghost.

To the Person of the Son , there is due This peculiar Honour ; that we offer-up all our Prayers in his Name ; being assured that “ whatsoever we ask of the Father in his Name , He will give it us ; ” — that we rely upon his Merits , — depend upon his Intercession , — obey him as our Lord , — love him as our Saviour , — and fear him as our Judge . — That we acknowledge his great Condescension, in loving us , and giving himself for us ; in that, when he was “ in the Form of God , he emptied himself of that Glory , and willingly made himself of no Reputation , and took upon him the Form of a Servant , and was made in the Likeness of Men ; and being found in Fashion as a Man , he humbled himself , and became obedient

obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross." For which Reason, as the Apostle adds in the Words immediately following, " God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of JESUS every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; (A) and that every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father." — Accordingly, upon this Account, we find the highest Honour ascribed to him both by Men and Angels.

" The four and twenty Elders fell down before the Lamb, and sung a new Song, saying, Thou art worthy -- ; For thou wast slain, and hast Redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation -- : And I heard the Voice of many Angels -- , saying -- Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power & Riches and Wisdom and Strength and Honour and Glory and Blessing :" — And, " Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, & to the Lamb for ever & ever :" — " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and has made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, to him be Glory and Dominion for ever." *REJOICE EVERLASTINGLY.* This

[A] See Note (A) page 386.

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" This is the peculiar Addition of the Christian Religion; that whereas before, all Men honoured the Father, they should now likewise Honour the Son, Which Honour paid to the Son of God, is THEREFORE no Diminution to the Honour of the Father, nor Derogation from the MONARCHY of the Universe; because the Greatness & Dignity, the Divinity and Majesty of the Son, is not contradistinct to, but derivative from, that of the Father; and consequently must be acknowledged to that very End, that it may be, (as St. Paul expressly declares,) to the Glory of the Father.

Lastly, Concerning the Honour peculiarly due to the Person of the SPIRIT, that which the Scripture declares, is; that we acknowledge him to be the divine Inspirer of the Prophets, both of the Old and New-Testament; and the immediate Worker of all those Signs and Wonders in Proof of the Christian Religion, which are properly stiled the Witness & Testimony, the Power & Demonstration of the Spirit; that he is also the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the immediate Distributer of all the Gifts of God, for the Edification of his Church; that therefore we receive and believe his Testimony, as delivered in the inspired Writings; obey his good Motions; be solicitous to obtain his Gifts & Grace; and

and infinitely careful not to grieve, or quench, or drive him from us, lest we be found to do Despite unto the Spirit of Grace ; which is in Scripture represented as a more unpardonable Fault, than offending against the Person even of our Saviour himself. But, of this we have already spoken. — May we every one of Us, therefore, so give Honour to the Father of all things, thro' the Mediation and Intercession of his Son, our Blessed Saviour, and by the Assistance and Operation of his Holy Spirit ; that by the Communion and Fellowship of the same Holy Spirit, and thro' the Merits and Death of the Son of God, making our Repentance available, we may be presented faultless before the Throne of the Father of infinite Majesty, in the great Day.

The End of the fourth Volume.

10. I found no writing on the left side of the
11. P.C. of the barrel by the nail, or in any other
12. place, except the following, which I find, written
13. on the right side of the barrel, near the bottom:
14. "I am a gun made by John B. Smith,
15. of New Haven, Conn., and he is the
16. maker of all my guns." The barrel is
17. 12 gauge, and the gun is a double-barrel
18. shotgun.

...and V. J. not who to tell him

